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ON THE EVE

A DRAMA IN THREE ACTS

BY

LEOPOLD KAMPF



NEW YORK

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***To the Russian Revolutionists,
The Silent Heroes***

CHARACTERS

VASIL.

ANNA RIKANSKAYA.

ANTON TLATCHOFF.

SOFYA IVANOVNA.

MASHA.

TANTAL.

GREGOR.

JUNIOR.

DOCTOR.

BANKER.

ARINA, old washerwoman.

SASHA, college student.

OLGA LIANOVICH, university student.

ERICH KUNZE.

IVAN PAVLOVICH, functionary in Treasury Department.

VARVARA, his wife and Anna's aunt.

MARIA, wife of engineer, friend of Varvara's.

TANYA, her sister.

NATALYA, wife of a Colonel of Gendarmerie.

KATYA, servant of Varvara's.

SEMYON, janitor.

COMMISSARY OF POLICE.

CAPTAIN OF GENDARMERIE.

(The action takes place in a large Russian town
on the eve of the Revolution.)

ACT I.

The stage is divided into two unequal parts. The right, the larger, represents a modestly furnished room. Right a window with a thick curtain, on the window-sill a flower-pot. In the wall in rear two doors. The right one leading into a back room, the left into the ante-room. A hanging-lamp in the middle of the room; a little way off, but near the middle of the room, a table (uncovered) with chairs around. At the right wall, in foreground, a sofa with a drawer. In the right corner a large trunk, above it an Ikon (religious image); in the left a wardrobe. Over the doors two portraits of Tsars. In the left wall, which partitions the stage, a tapestried door leading into a sort of a closet which is dimly lighted with a small lamp in the background. The room is narrow and only a few wooden boxes in foreground are visible to the audience.

Time: Afternoon.

As the scene opens, a gentle rhythmical clatter is heard coming from the closet.

Masha and Sofya are sitting at the table.

Masha is a bright, lively-looking girl of about eighteen. Fair hair, intelligent face, dressed as a servant girl.

Sofya is about twenty-nine years old. Wears short hair.

They are folding small sheets of freshly-printed

paper, and laying them in a handbag standing between them on the floor.

Masha stops her work and becomes deeply engrossed in a book.

SOFYA (*continuing her folding, as she notices this, kindly*): Come, come, Masha, reading again? There is no time for that just now, we must hurry, for Anna may be here any moment and everything must be ready. Plenty of time afterwards to read your Marx.

MASHA (*continuing to read*): Just one moment. (*After a moment puts down her book and begins folding again.*) You're right.

Short pause. The clatter becomes louder.

SOFYA (*stops to listen, then rises and goes to closet door*): Careful, the machine's making too much noise. (*Goes back to her work.*)

The noise becomes softer and softer, at last ceases and Anton enters out of closet. He is about 34 years old, sharply marked features, haggard face, coughs now and again. He is in his shirt-sleeves and shields his eyes from the daylight as he comes in. He lays some more printed sheets on the table and walks up and down the room nervously.

ANTON: Curse that noisy thing, can't stand it any longer. The beast needs a thorough oiling. Only a few more copies—I'd be happy.

SOFYA (*anxiously*): You're terribly nervous to-day.

ANTON: Why, the confounded old junk makes such a racket.

SOFYA: It's not so bad, and there isn't a soul in the warehouse down-stairs. It couldn't be heard anyhow.

ANTON: Never mind; but I tell you something is going to happen to-day. I feel it—I feel it.

MASHA: You are a bit off. There's no use giving us a scare.

ANTON (*irritated*): Vasili hasn't brought the passport for Tantal yet—and the damned janitor threatens to let the police commissary in on us. (*Pointing to the back door.*) Is he still asleep?

MASHA: Of course he is—else he would have been out by this time. (*Looks into back room.*) Yes, he's still sleeping, the poor chap.

SOFYA: He's been sleeping almost 24 hours.

ANTON: Oh, well, there isn't much of a chance for sleep in Peter and Paul fortress—and seven toilsome months at that.

MASHA: And the last ten nights he said he hadn't had a wink of sleep.—The filing can be done by night only.

ANTON: They managed the business first rate, the St. Petersburg comrades.

MASHA: And naturally he couldn't sleep by day—and then direct here.

ANTON (*excitedly*): But downright madness it was all the same—without a passport, and of all places—to us—here.

SOFYA: They knew that Vasili had left us and that we needed help. And Tantal had to be hidden, he

needed quarantine, and he couldn't have a better one of course.

ANTON: If that blockhead of a janitor had not noticed him yesterday we could do without a passport in the meantime—

MASHA: And such bad luck! Just now Sergey to be arrested.

SOFYA: It's a week already, isn't it?

ANTON: And twenty passports to be seized with him. We could make fine use of them now. What's to be done? (*Goes back to the closet.*)

The clatter begins anew, rather softer than before; every now and then it sounds louder.

MASHA: He is so restless to-day.

SOFYA: No wonder. Ever at the mouth of a volcano.

MASHA: I have caught it from him—I feel so nervous myself, too.

SOFYA: Anton can't hold out much longer—he's overstrained. He must get out of this hole for a time.

MASHA: Do you think he'll do it?

SOFYA: We can stand it better, can't we?

Short pause, then a loud ringing of the bell.

Sofya gathers up the remaining sheets quickly from the table, throws them into the handbag and puts it on the trunk in the corner. At the same time Masha knocks at the tapestried door leading into the closet, then throws a kerchief over her head and runs out into the ante-room.

The clatter stops instantly.

Anton rushes out and hastily pulls on his coat

which was hanging on the wall beside the closet door.

Masha comes back with a newspaper and a letter in her hand; takes off the kerchief.

MASHA: It was only the postman—(*throws the paper into the corner contemptuously*)—"The Official Messenger"—

ANTON (*angrily*): One can't get a moment's rest. (*Takes off his coat and hangs it on the nail again and is on the point of going back to the closet.*)

Masha opens the letter and takes out a photograph which she hands to Sofya.

SOFYA (*looking at it with a smile*): Look, Anton.

ANTON (*holding the picture and smiling*): Sery-ozhka.

MASHA: Your boy? How could you have been so long without a photograph of him?

ANTON (*gloomily*): The grandmother who keeps him is so superstitious. Little children shouldn't be photographed she says.

SOFYA: You see, she has gotten over her superstition now, though, and given us this surprise—

MASHA: That's so good of your mother.

SOFYA: Is there no letter with it?

MASHA: No—it will probably come to-morrow.

SOFYA: How lovely he is. (*Sighing.*) When shall we see him again, Anton? You are so run down, you must have rest. A change of air will do you good. (*Beseechingly.*) Let us go over for a few days.

ANTON: Funny ideas you women get into your heads. Time enough to rest when in prison.

MASHA: Nonsense.

SOFYA (*kissing the photo and handing it to Anton, who looks at it for a while and puts it into his pocket*): You just see what a fine revolutionist he'll turn out some day. When he's ten, we'll bring him over here—shan't we, Antosha? He'll be quite a help to us then—

ANTON: When he's ten! Seven long years till then. Do you know what that means?

SOFYA (*shaking her head*): Seven years?!

ANTON: By that time, perhaps, we shall all have been citizens of Siberia for six years.

MASHA: Oh, Antosha, you are a croaker! Perhaps by that time—in seven years—there will no longer be any need of such holes. (*Pointing to the tapestried door.*) Perhaps by that time we may print free ideas by daylight in Russia and send them out into the world.

ANTON: You're an impossible optimist, Masha. In seven years, in seven years—(*Goes back to the closet*).

Clatter begins again. Masha and Sofya open the handbag again and resume the folding of printed sheets as before.

SOFYA (*to herself*): Anna not here yet. (*After a moment.*) Nor Vasili with the passport either—I'm really getting anxious; sure enough, there is not a passport ready to hand.

MASHA: He'll bring one. Vasili is sure to get one

somehow or other. (*After a while.*) But do you know I can't quite understand him now?

SOFYA: Neither can I.

MASHA: Vasili of the iron nerves—suddenly to become so uncertain and wavering! How his whole heart was in the work! And suddenly off—the last issue was hardly set in type. A blessing some one else turned up so quickly. What could have happened so suddenly?

SOFYA: Not so suddenly—it's a month since I've noticed something. He told me he would come to-day for the last time, and then he will take up something else. He says he is tired of this life.

MASHA: What's the matter?

SOFYA: I suspect something—but I'm not sure.

MASHA (*insisting*): What is it? what is it? Do tell me—

SOFYA: To me it looks as if his heart had been touched.

MASHA: Oh, that would be funny.

ANTON (*coming in with a new batch of printed sheets and laying it on the table*): At last.

MASHA: Already? Finished?

ANTON: The type must be distributed now, at once. Come, Masha, help me—we must hurry up. Sofya, you'll manage it alone—only a few more. (*With a sudden change of tone.*) How careless you women are! Are you sure no one is behind that curtain across the street, standing and staring at us?

MASHA (*mockingly*): If you can't see whether any one is behind the curtain there, how can any busy-

body from over there see through our curtain what we are doing here? Don't bother, Antosha.

ANTON: We can't be too cautious. Better sit here, Sofya. (*Sofya seats herself on the chair he points to. To Masha.*) Come on.

MASHA (*to Sofya*): You keep watch here, then. (*Goes with Anton into the closet.*)

ANTON (*is heard whistling softly in the closet, then*): Vasili still not here? A little thing like that may easily cost us our lives.

Sofya has finished folding, closes the handbag and puts it back on the trunk in the corner. Three short rings at the bell.

SOFYA: At last. (*Goes out into the ante-room, where she is heard talking to some one. Then she enters with Vasili, a tall, slender young man about twenty-two, with a pale, handsome, somewhat worn face, framed in rather long, raven hair; frequently folds his hands behind him. Lays on the table a small, heavy parcel tied with a string; rubbing his fingers.*)

VASILY: Damned heavy.

SOFYA (*opening the closet door*): Antosha, Vasili has come—the passport is here.

ANTON (*from the closet*): Hello Vasili! I'll be in in a minute.

MASHA (*also from the closet*): How do you do, Vasili?

VASILY: What are you doing in there?

MASHA: Distributing type.

VASILY: Is everything finished already?

SOFYA (*shutting the closet door and looking at the*

package on the table): What have you there—type?

VASIL: Yes. So heavy and must be carried in the street by the string as a matter of precaution.

SOFYA: How did you feel outside, after this hole?

VASIL: Oh, I feel oppressed there, too. (*Looking towards the window.*) How absent-minded! I didn't even think of looking up at the window to see whether it was safe to come up—

SOFYA: Thank goodness the flower-pot is still in its place. Things aren't so bad with us yet. I think they'll leave us alone for a while.

VASIL: Never mind—it is dreary outside—nasty-dirty—a spy at every step.

SOFYA: Is it possible?

VASIL: The air tainted—times uncertain——

SOFYA: Only don't say anything in Anton's presence, he is so nervous to-day. And you—are you going in for a change of air—going abroad?

VASIL: No, no—I stay, but I must say good-bye to you to-day; one never knows what will happen. It is painful, though, so very painful——. Four months—how good it felt to confess to you when my soul was oppressed! It was always easy to open one's heart before you——


SOFYA (*jokingly*): And there is always something to oppress you—that's your nature, isn't it?

Anton enters.

VASIL (*pointing to parcel on table*): There—bonbons for you.

ANTON: Good. All complete?

VASIL: Only the small "i" is missing.



ANTON: Too bad—too bad.

VASIL: I'll bring it to-day, though the string has almost cut through the skin.

ANTON (*calls*): Masha, here's new type.

VASIL: And here's the passport. (*Hands it to Anton.*)

ANTON: Allah be thanked. (*Looking into passport.*) So—Carl Santoff from Kieff, then. It lifts a load off my heart. That scoundrel of a janitor has already held me up. Paid his visit to-day—the rascal. (*Jokingly to Masha who comes in.*) And Masha is a friend of his.

All laugh.

MASHA (*joining in the laugh*): Such is my lot.

ANTON (*pointing to the door of the back room*): The poor fellow is still sleeping. I'll have to wake him, though; he must know his name and where he comes from. (*Goes to back room.*)

MASHA (*taking up parcel with the new type*): Now we shall no longer have to hunt worn-out "o's" to print "e's" with. I'll go and put them with their fellow letters. (*Half singing.*) New letters—new letters. (*Goes laughing into the closet.*)

VASIL (*walking up and down restlessly, watched by Sofya; mimicking Masha*): Letters—letters. (*Loudly*) Nitroglycerine—Sofya Ivanovna—nitroglycerine. (*Then calming down.*) Has Anna been here yet?

SOFYA (*trying to check a smile*): No, not yet, but she'll certainly be here soon.

VASIL: Why are you laughing?

SOFYA: Oh, nothing. You are expecting her, aren't you? (*Watching Vasili, who is striding up and down the room in agitation.*) What's wrong with you, Vasili? I don't like your looks to-day.

VASILY (*sadly*): Do you know what yearning is? Is there a remedy for it?

SOFYA: You told me yourself—I now recollect—that once in Paris, a deep yearning came over you, it gave you no peace or rest, but the cause called you irresistibly, and though the police here were after you, and in spite of our warnings you came nevertheless, and—and—your yearning was cured.

VASILY: But it is quite a different yearning this time—much worse—much stronger.

SOFYA: Well—such is your nature, I guess.

VASILY: Don't make fun of me. I should be ashamed to confess to any one else—trifles our people would call it. Just now when all hearts are beating high for the Cause, my heart is full of dark thoughts. Everything I have till now held sacred and holy they oust out of my heart and build a temple for themselves therein.

SOFYA: Don't you know what our Nyechayeff said long ago? The more perfect a revolutionist is, the more he resembles a log of wood.

VASILY: Clever man, a wise saying, I know, but how does his wisdom help me? I am not as unfeeling as a log of wood—not fortunate enough to be. I used to be proud of it before. Even at college, when my classmates wrote letters on pink paper and exchanged photographs, I despised all that nonsense and thought

myself made of other stuff. But suddenly—suddenly——

SOFYA (*amused*): So you're in love, are you—poor fellow.

VASILY: I wanted to tear it out by the very roots, but the roots are too deep now, they cannot be torn out but along with me.

SOFYA (*soothingly*): But why tear them out?

VASILY: Sofya, do you know what it means to one who has to work for the Cause—to live in constant unrest—to count the hours and minutes till the next chance of seeing her; be martyred in her absence with thoughts of her——

SOFYA (*tenderly*): You are a big boy.

VASILY (*desperately*): But, dear Sofya, can't you see how terrible this yearning is, how intangible, how irresistible, morbid perhaps. Not only when she is away—even in her presence, when quite near her, something draws me to her, a longing after her, and yet—speak I must not.

SOFYA: What freaks of fancy are these?

VASILY: I may be soul-sick, but can't help it.

SOFYA: Vasili, you are talking like a child. After all, woman is only woman, even if it be—— (*she falters, their eyes meet; then lightly*) even if it be Anna Rikanskaya. Believe me——

VASILY (*embarrassed, impatiently, after a moment*): As if you didn't know her—have you never heard her talk? I can see those questioning astonished eyes, as if she were asking sadly but scornfully: "And you dare to defile our sacred precepts with selfish con-

siderations, with useless personal feelings, with nonsense?" I could never bear this scorn from her. (*Resignedly.*) Do you understand now? (*After a moment.*) Perhaps, too, she is right. If we listened to all our inmost thoughts the Cause might suffer. (*Impatiently.*) But always the Cause—the Cause—the Cause.

SOFYA (*amused*): Then you're jealous of the Cause?

VASILY (*despairingly*): Yes, yes. Jealous of the thoughts, of the time, of everything I cannot share with her. (*More quietly.*) All of us willingly sacrifice our lives for the Cause, but, Sofya, you see, I will not let mine ooze out by drops. I will not wait till this yearning has consumed me utterly—and therefore——

SOFYA: And therefore?

VASILY (*syllable by syllable*): Ni-tro-glyc-er-ine.

A single loud ring at the bell—Anton rushes in and pulls on his coat quickly. Sofya knocks at the closet door. Masha comes out, throws her kerchief over her head, and runs into the ante-room. She returns with Semyon, the janitor, and the Police Commissary.

MASHA: Ma'am, the Commissary of Police.

Semyon servilely follows the steps of the Commissary.

COMMISSARY (*still in doorway, sternly*): Good afternoon. I suppose you ought to know, sir, that no one is allowed to have lodgers without passports. And you, sir——

ANTON (*with exaggerated politeness*): Ah, you come about the passport. Only a relative of mine from Kieff—just now sleeping in there. They have just sent his passport after him. I'll bring it in a minute. (*Goes into the back room.*)

Commissary looks around the room.

ANTON (*appearing in the doorway after a while*): This way, please, sir.

Commissary goes out with Anton into back room.

VASILY (*softly, but significantly—to Sofya*): Anna not here yet—

SOFYA: So it is. (*Goes to window, takes away the flower-pot, and puts it on the table.*) You have forgotten to water the flower again, Masha—you forget everything!

MASHA: Yes, ma'am, I'll water it at once.

Sofya grows anxious and goes into the back room.

MASHA (*standing by the closet door, to Semyon, reproachfully*): You had to tell the Commissary right away.

SEMYON: I had to, naturally, it's my duty. But don't be angry with me. You know all the same that I am a good fellow.

MASHA: Oh, yes, we know you.

SEMYON (*playfully*): Oh, Masha, Masha dear—stop your joking. (*Looking at the Tsars' portraits.*) Which one is Tsar Nicholas?

MASHA: Neither, both are Alexanders.

SEMYON: How's that?

MASHA (*pointing at the portraits*): The Second—the Third.

SEMYON: And the First? How can you have the Second and the Third and not the First? Without him there could be no second or third.

MASHA (*suppressing a laugh*): Yes, right you are.

SEMYON (*complacently*): Of course, it is just like, as you might say, with a suit of clothes—you have got a coat, and you have got a vest and have no pants.

MASHA: You are right as always, 'tis really true, we must buy Alexander the First. I'll tell madam about it.

SEMYON: My advice is always right. Well, I'm going; I'll wait for the Commissary down-stairs.

MASHA (*playfully*): And what if I don't let you out?

SEMYON: Ho—ho— (*To Vasili impudently.*) My compliments— You are quite a stranger— Living far away now?


VASIL (curtly): Yes, far—

SEMYON: Well, so long then. (*Exit with Masha.*)

Talking is heard in the back room and Anton and the Commissary appear in the doorway.

COMMISSARY (*over-politely as Anton presses a bill into his hand*): It was entirely—because the Commissioner was so angry. (*Bowing politely, taking his leave.*) You will excuse me, entirely because of the Commissioner. (*Goes out into the ante-room with Anton.*)

ANTON (*returning*): Thank goodness the passport was here—otherwise I should have had to give him



ten roubles. As it is we got off with three— (*mimicking the Commissary*) because of the Commissioner.

VASILY (*replacing the flower-pot on the window-sill*): That, too, is worth something to make friends with the Commissary. Now that he's been here and seen nothing—you may feel safer about the printing business.

ANTON: I've been so nervous to-day. I can't rest.

From the back room Sofya comes in, leading Tantal by the arm. He is a small man, very worn, with sunken chest and Jewish features; gives the impression of great weariness; a bristly, neglected beard gives his face a wild look; movements slow; speaks in a low voice. He wears slippers, and holds the turned-up collar of his coat round his neck with his hand to cover his bare neck. Seats himself on the sofa. When the others speak he answers with a tired nod of the head.

SOFYA (*to Vasili*): So here's David Cahan in person—thanks to you alias Karl Santoff of Kieff; and, in fact—our dear Tantal. (*Pointing out Vasili to Tantal.*) And that's our late assistant and your predecessor, Vasili.

Masha comes in from ante-room.

ANTON (*half joking, yet a bit reproachfully*): He worked so well with us, the good-for-nothing fellow, four whole months, then suddenly, when this issue of the paper was barely finished, packed up his goods and chattels and (*emphatically*) without a single pang of conscience off he went.

VASILY: Tantal is sure to outdo me.


TANTAL (*deprecatingly smiling with an effort*): That remains to be seen. (*Holding out his hand to Vasili, who takes it.*) Thanks for the passport. Sofya Ivanovna told me.

VASIL: It was downright madness indeed—to come here—without a passport.

TANTAL: Yes, but it came about so suddenly. When our comrades got me off, there was scarcely time to change my clothes in the carriage. Had to cram addresses in my head. A passport was out of the question—besides we knew there would be no trouble getting a passport—you have plenty of them. But I managed to get something better than a passport from them. (*Drawing a revolver out of his pocket.*) That protects from police claws better than paper. (*Puts it away again. Shuddering with horror.*) Never, never will I go back there. (*All look at him with mingled pity and admiration. Tantal continues with raised voice as if awakening.*) Can you imagine what it means to know that on the other side of the wall, in the cell next door, another comrade is lying; to hear how every day his brain darkens more and more, and to say to yourself, When will my turn come?

All follow his words with breathless interest.

TANTAL (*after a minute*): Or hardly have you fallen asleep, and it's difficult to find sleep there, when an officer comes into your cell, and you are led through long, damp passages to the examination room; the prosecuting judge intimates to you that one or the other of your comrades has already confessed



and will accordingly receive only slight punishment, while your case will drag on—and what boots it all,—for, alleges the judge—everything has been learned from your comrades. (*With growing loudness and excitement.*) So there is nothing left for you but to keep silence and to doubt— (*Sorrowfully.*) And then one day, afterward, you see that same comrade of yours whom you have already doubted—for the judge has slandered him as having confessed everything—through the bars of your cell window you see how that same comrade is coolly going to the gallows. Your heart bursts with remorse. I dared to doubt, to suspect him. Would he ever forgive me? Would that he had cast one last look at my barred window!—I see the preparations are almost finished—suddenly his wandering eye sweeps about and rises slowly—my blood almost curdles—our eyes meet. (*Closes his eyes at these words.*) That eye—that eye—would rouse the whole of Europe with the wild question: “How long, how long yet?” (*Stops for a moment, then slowly in a suppressed voice.*) The hangman puts the noose over his head, when suddenly in a loud voice he shouts (*carried away, very loudly*): “Long live the Social Revolution!”

All look round in fear at the door and windows.

SOFYA (*quickly*): No one heard. You needn't fear.

MASHA: Who was it?

TANTAL (*softly*): Melitski.

ALL (*with reverence and sympathy*): Melitski!

Pause. Three measured rings at the bell.



SOFYA (*rising*): Anuta!


Goes into the ante-room and returns with Anna Rikanskaya, a charming girl of 26, slender, with thick, fair hair parted in front à la Botticelli, and tied in a heavy knot low on her neck at the back. Dressed in black, except for a laid-down white linen collar; wears a long, loose cape, open in front and hanging carelessly over her shoulders at the back. Every now and then her bright laugh is heard, almost childish in its heartiness and carelessness gaiety. When speaking earnestly—she uses energetic, sweeping gestures. Very girlish and fascinating. She shakes hands silently with all.

ANNA (*respectfully to Tantal who remains sitting on the sofa*): You are Tantal? You were sleeping when I was here yesterday. (*Shakes Tantal's hand, who smiles at her, then throws herself into the nearest chair, evidently tired.*) Quite a party here to-day, I see. Even in this den a little gaiety seems to have crept in. (*Laughs.*)

MASHA (*shaking her head*): Gay, very gay indeed.

SOFYA (*to Anna*): Why are you so tired? Take off your things, won't you?

ANNA: Listen folks, what happened to me. I just got out of the house, when I saw I was trailed—a guardian angel on my heels. How was I to get away—to go back to my house was out of the question—to yours, worse still. Straight I hailed a cab, and in ten minutes was at the entrance of house Number fifty-six with gates on both streets. He, too, was



alighting from a carriage. I rushed into the house—at the opposite gate an idle cab was just passing by—I jumped into it—another couple of double-gate houses and—my psychologist was no more. (*She laughs.*)

SOFYA: But are you quite sure of it?

ANNA: You may bet on it, else I'd surely not be here now. (*Turning to Tantal, tenderly.*) This is our dear little carrier-pigeon, she brings us all we require from the outside world—papers, letters, news, everything we need. The postman only brings us family letters and (*smiling*) "The Official Messenger." (*All laugh.*)

SOFYA (*pointing to the Tsars' portraits*): We could not do without all of this. (*To Anna.*) What have you brought to-day, Anuta dear?

ANNA (*to Anton*): Come here, Antoshka, here are two letters from St. Petersburg, some manuscripts—some articles for "The Light"—two appeals, one for mobilization, one for a strike. Must be printed at once. The present issue is ready, I suppose.

SOFYA: Yes, of course, waiting for you. I shall pack it up at once.

ANNA (*to Anton*): But the appeal for the strike is especially important. They told me it had to be ready to-morrow.

SOFYA (*takes the bundle of folded papers out of the handbag and wraps them up in the newspaper Masha has thrown into a corner. Jokingly*): See, "The Official Messenger," too, is of some use after all.

Anton takes the papers Anna has given him into the closet and then comes back.

MASHA (*looking at a fly she has caught on the curtain*): Look! The first fly this year.

VASIL: Let it go! Don't torment it.

MASHA (*laughing*): How soft-hearted you are! (*Letting it go.*) Oh, well, let it go!

SOFYA (*busy making up the parcel of papers, teasingly*): What about the nitroglycerine?

VASIL (*gruffly*): It surely won't be used for flies.

All laugh.

SOFYA (*laying the papers ready on the table*): Here, the rest for local consumption. There's not a single copy in the house now.

ANNA: Has everything been sent out to the provinces?

SOFYA: Why, yesterday;—didn't you know?

ANNA (*to Tantal*): Now tell us the news from St. Petersburg, Tantal!


TANTAL (*jokingly*): Well, thank goodness we can't complain of a lack of gendarmes.

All laugh.

ANNA: Months ago when we heard of you, we didn't think we should ever see Tantal again, and now — (*joyfully*) Tantal is with us.

TANTAL (*lightly*): Oh, well, we managed to get out.

VASIL: And now you are simply running into their clutches again. You should have given yourself an airing and not run so from one prison into an-



other—to this jail life—in this printing shop. Abroad you would have been safer at any rate.

TANTAL (*rising rather angrily*): And you—have you been there? Could you—could you stand it there for any length of time—could you have any rest there, when you heard how your brothers were giving their lives here for the Cause? (*In a different tone.*) Even in the narrow cell one is gnawed by the thought that he is lying useless—can do nothing for the Cause—but the prison walls can't be broken by running one's head against them. Could you, I ask, bring yourself to breathe the air of freedom abroad whilst here—(*Is seized with a terrible fit of coughing and sinks into seat. All alarmed. He, as if awakening.*) But this much I will tell you—never will I fall into their cruel claws again.

He is seized again with a fit of coughing which he vainly tries to overcome. At last he puts his arms on the table and lays his head on them.

ANNA (*in a suppressed voice, glancing at him*): We still have real men amongst us—

VASILI (*embarrassed*): Of course. (*Then with more assurance.*) But I tell you, Anna Andreyevna—there are some who suffer tortures that are still—

TANTAL (*rising, in a weak, hardly audible voice*): I must go to sleep again—Saints were only human—Russian revolutionists too—are but human beings. (*Holds out his hand to Anna.*) You are here often, are you not?

ANNA (*smiling*): I give French lessons here daily, as Masha has explained to the janitor.

TANTAL (*to Vasili*): And good luck to you in all you undertake—in the name of the Cause. (*Goes coughing into the back room. All look after him in silence.*)

VASILI (*nervously*). And that's what they make of us!

ANNA: But still, we don't go under.

VASILI: Who knows?

ANNA (*sorrowfully*): Vasili, Vasili! You should say that?

VASILI: Well, if we don't hurry up—

ANTON: But how can we hurry up?

VASILI: How long do you think will they let you sit here and do your printing? Some day, when you least expect them, the police will suddenly come down on you and make a search.

ANTON (*disagreeably struck*): Well, what of it?

VASILI: They'll string us up anyhow, sooner or later—so we may as well be of some use now.

ANTON: Others will come after us and continue to print. Our aspirations and ideas won't go down with the last breath that the hangman's rope squeezes out of our breasts—won't go down when the doors of the dungeon close upon us. There are always new hands to lift our standard in the battle again!

VASILI (*sorrowfully*): Always more brothers to climb Golgotha to no purpose!—Generations come and go—and we aren't one step ahead, Antoshka.

ANTON: But the memory of the martyrs, Vasili—that awakens new eagerness for the fight—till the dreams become reality.

VASILY (*bitterly*): Yes, dreams—nothing but dreams. We shall pass away without seeing even the dawn of the longed-for day.

ANTON: But our bodies will be the bridge leading to a happier future for our successors.

VASILY (*impatiently*): Our sheepish patience has populated dungeons and mines. But the hour is come, it is here now! Don't you feel it? Russia is like a powder magazine—only the spark is wanting!

ANTON (*resignedly*): What are you thinking of? That is far away yet. (*Shaking his head.*) Many a letter will be worn out before explosives come of it.

VASILY: Your heads have been turned with your penny jobs,—like moles under ground,—house to house pedlars that you are,—that snail-speed propaganda of yours!

SOFYA (*sadly*): We are still on the eve of the great day!

VASILY: And I say dawn is already breaking. Now is the time to wake up—

ANTON (*as before*): Incurable optimist! There is much, much work to be done yet. They are still in a deep, deep slumber.


VASILY: But just look around you. If you could see a copy of "The Light" ten days after it is published, you could hardly read it, it is so dirty and worn, for every single copy goes round from hand to hand.

ANTON: But outside the walls of the town—all over the broad lands of Russia—there they are still

sleeping. There still remains plenty of waking to be done.

VASIL: And more slow bleeding— (*Excitedly.*) This blood-letting at retail will not take us very far. The masses outside the town walls will not stir if you tell them they are hard up—they know it without your telling; and if you merely say that you are trying to help them, they distrust you. But when you show them blood, not blood puddles, but that the Volga, the Dvina, the Vistula are overflowing with blood, then they will seize their scythes and follow us! . (*In a whisper.*) It is then that blood gets a voice that cries for vengeance—that rings ever louder and louder—that drives on to ever new struggles—and does not die away—and will not rest— (*breathing heavily*) until victory is won.

ANNA (*who has till now sat in her chair absorbed in thought without speaking, rises suddenly and remains standing in the middle of the room. At first softly, then louder, carried away by her growing excitement*): Yes, the Bell of Blood must swing—loudly it must ring, so that all Russia may hear. There is no time now for waking one by one, Antoshka—for ringing the bell in every single house. It is the great bell that must go swing—swing—swing. Already I see the peasantry awakening! The war has done it, the cruel taxes, the demons of hunger and bitter want. They will understand the sound of our bell—the clang of the bell of blood. It will bring more brightness—this clang of the bell—than all the rays



of the sun—than all your copies of "The Light." Every swing of the bell means—a human life. . . .

Dusk has gradually stolen over the room. All are sitting in deep silence listening to her. Vasili leans against the head of the sofa, hanging on her words.

It will give them courage and they will understand that it is not a criminal, but a saint, who gives his life to strike the bell. Ever stronger, ever louder, we will make it peal! What was smouldering will blaze up—and the hard ice of the long, bleak, cruel winter will melt away— (*In ecstasy.*) And a general sprouting will begin. . . . Those a l i v e—the bell will call to l i f e. . . . (*In a whisper.*) And will kiss the ear of Sleeping Princess—and the life anew begins in the castle wrapped in slumber—they awake in all its stories—down there in the deepest cellar too—they listen to the boom of the blood bell and come out from there in swarms—no more dread of knouts and cannons, nor of gallows—but their scythes they brandish bravely—and their weary hands are stretching through the darkness to the Future. . . .

It has now become quite dark and only the light from a street lamp comes into the room, so that only the outlines of Sofya, Masha and Anton can be seen; Vasili's head is drooping. Anna has illustrated her last words with a dramatic gesture, and remains for some time with her hands raised upwards.

SOFYA (as if in ecstasy, softly): Don't you hear

them—don't you hear them—the sounds of the bell of blood? How they are calling, shouting. . . .

MASHA (*in the same way*): And the scythes in millions flashing—look how bravely they are swinging. . . .

ANNA (*solemnly*): And bringing to us—the dawn of the morrow. . . .

ANTON (*pained*): Stop! stop!

MASHA (*joyfully, but doubtfully*): Then the slavery has been ended?!

ANNA: Then the slavery has been ended—then the sun shines freshly out—heavy clouds have all been scattered—and . . . at last is Russia free!

SOFYA (*hopefully, but still doubting, like an echo*): Free. . . .?!

Silence.

ANTON (*sighs, then sadly as if disillusioned*): Useless dreams! All useless dreams— (*Mounts a chair and lights the hanging-lamp. Sofya and Masha are still sitting in ecstasy, gazing in front of them.*)

ANNA (*after a moment, passionately*): To buy this victory—tell me, is any loss too great? What tortures are too horrible? What does a human life count for if it can bring the dawn of the morrow one moment sooner? Compared with the endless suffering of our poor Russia, what does personal suffering matter? I believe in the power of sacrifice, I believe in the power of innocent blood—

VASILI (*in despair*): And what is the consequence of your belief?

ANNA: That we must completely belong to the

Cause,—no concessions to any personal weakness or suffering—

VASILY (*excitedly throwing on the table Masha's book which he has had in his hand for some time, as before*): Less talk and more action! (*Walks agitatedly up and down the room; all looking at him with astonishment. He feels it, stops; seeing something like reproach in Anna's eyes, runs up to her.*) Forgive me, Anna—Andreyevna, forgive me—it is my nerves— (*He grasps her hand and carries it to his lips.*) Forgive me then— (*Kisses her hand, then apologetically.*) Even though this is not in fashion with us.

ANNA (*smiling indulgently*): Yes, yes, I know—it is only your excessive zeal—the impulse to act for the Cause—all the better.—

VASILY (*as if he had not heard her words*): But tell me, Anna, can you not understand that a weakness like this—this personal suffering—must work terrible havoc on one?—

ANNA: Which of us has not suffered?!

VASILY: But I mean a suffering which makes the most sacred ideals seem as nothing—a suffering which makes a man live only for it. A yearning so mighty that if the cause of his country—of the whole world were calling for him, he must still it—or die!

ANNA (*anxiously*): You're only alluding to a possibility, aren't you, Vasili? (*Gesture.*) Speaking theoretically?

VASILY (*unsteadily*): Yes—

ANNA: And I really was afraid something had

happened. . . . (*threatening laughingly.*) Because—perhaps a woman. . . .

VASILI (*coloring, embarrassed, in an unsteady voice, quickly*): No, no, but—even if it were?

ANNA (*as before*): I wanted but to warn you—a woman makes a man weak—she teaches him what “fear” is.—

VASILI (*slowly taking long steps, distracted, abruptly, with pain*): Yes—yes—you are right—yes. . . . (*Seizes his hat suddenly.*) Good-bye, all of you! (*Goes out quickly by door to ante-room.*)

ANTON (*calling after him*): Why are you off in such a hurry? Bring the other type to-day. (*Opens the door to go after him.*) Gone already! (*Shuts the door again.*)

ANNA (*interrupting the painful silence*): Well, I suppose I must be going too. (*Pulls her cape on.*) What has happened to Vasili? Do you suspect anything?

SOFYA: You guessed it, Anuta—he’s in love—(*Adding quickly.*) At least so it seems to me—

ANNA: Poor fellow! (*Shakes hands with them all. Almost to herself as she fastens her cape at the neck.*) How can it have happened? He has been here and nowhere else four long months. . . . (*With a stolen look at Sofya, who smiles meaningly to her; noticing this she becomes rather embarrassed, takes the parcel from the table.*) Well, good-bye. Take care of yourselves. (*She goes out quickly.*)

Sofya and Masha remain sitting, gazing silently before them.

ANTON (*looks at them, then begins moving restlessly about the room, goes out into the ante-room and brings in an alcohol lamp which he puts on the table, lights and places a kettle of water on it. He looks at Sofya and Masha again, then begins his feverish movements about the room once more. Irritably*): Why don't you say something? (*Shuddering.*) Such a strange coldness in the room now!

SOFYA (*as in a dream*): The bell of blood. . . .

MASHA (*in the same way*): The scythes in millions. . . .

ANTON (*impatiently*): Dreams—nothing but dreams— (*Seats himself at the table, takes the photograph from his pocket and looks at it, then hands it to Sofya.*) There, better look at Seryozhka.

Sofya and Masha look at the picture, meanwhile Anton rises suddenly, runs to the window, pushes the curtain aside, looks out into the street, but immediately turns around again with a disturbed look and runs his fingers through his hair; breathlessly

There is somebody down there. . . . (Helpless, begins his feverish walk again.)

MASHA (*goes quickly to the window, looks out, then reproachfully*): A harmless passer-by— (*Impatiently.*) You are beginning again— The idea! but not a misstep has been made! Vasili has kept well clear of them so far—

SOFYA: And Anna, too—

MASHA: And as for Cahan, you need not worry on account of him; on the contrary—the police com-

missary has been here—and the passport is so splendidly put together.

ANTON: And if not? (*After a moment.*) But Masha, you have had too little experience. We can't be too careful, yet no care can protect us against a thousand stupid accidents! Somebody escapes—rushes in at our gate for shelter—and there you are—our house is searched.

MASHA (*beseechingly*): Have pity on us, Antoshka, and don't torment us with unnecessary fears. Calm yourself—you are over-worked and exhausted.

ANTON (*more calmly, seating himself at table again*): If only that cursed old machine wouldn't be so noisy like a fishwife. Well, thank goodness we are through with the twenty-sixth number.

MASHA: You simply must go away from here for a while—or you will break down entirely.

SOFYA (*holding up the child's photograph*): I must see Seryozhka. (*Beseechingly.*) Let us go to him.

MASHA: In a month—you will see—Tantal will have learned everything, and he and I shall be able to do quite well without you—at least for a few weeks. You will see for yourself.

Anton shakes his head doubtfully. Silence. Suddenly he pulls himself together, rises, and listens attentively—Sofya and Masha look at him anxiously.

ANTON (*hoarsely*): There—behind the door—we are lost—

Sofya and Masha jump up quickly. A loud



ring at the bell. Anton starts up with a shudder, Masha and Sofya give a low cry and seize their heads with both hands; all three stand as if rooted to the spot, gazing at each other in horror.

TANTAL (*appears in the doorway of the dark back room and whispers slowly*): Gendarmes. (*Holding out the revolver.*) One ball for myself. Five at your service, if you wish them. Fare you well! (*Goes back into the room, leaving the door open.*)

Another loud ring and a thundering knocking at the outside door of the ante-room.

SOFYA (*in suppressed tones, to Anton*): The list of addresses!

ANTON: Lock the door! (*Rushes into the closet and comes back with some letters and papers. In the meantime Masha has turned the key in the lock of the door leading to ante-room. A crowd is heard at the outside door of the ante-room trying to break it open. Sofya has taken the kettle of boiling water off the alcohol lamp. They are feverishly burning the letters and papers in the flames.*)

From the back room a revolver shot is heard through the open door, and the fall of a body. The outside door of the ante-room has at last been broken in, and the stamp of heavy boots and clanking of swords is heard in the ante-room. The door leading into ante-room is now shaking furiously, while the papers are burned up with growing haste.

ANTON: Masha! quick—the flower-pot from the window!

At this moment the gendarmes break in and

fall upon Anton, Sofya and Masha just as the last named is rushing to the window.

CAPTAIN (*sternly*): Who fired a shot just now? (*No one answers. Through the open door a gendarme notices the body of Tantal lying in the back room and points it out to the Captain. Seeing it.*) Ah! Have you more arms? (*No one speaks.*) Speak, or I shall order your persons to be searched. (*No one speaks.—To the Gendarmes.*) Turn their pockets out. (*The Gendarmes silently do as commanded.*)

MASHA (*struggling*): I won't let you!

CAPTAIN (*to his men*): Hold her hands. I shall search her myself. (*Does so.*)

ANTON: Poor Masha—

CAPTAIN (*to Anton and Sofya*): I order you neither to move from this spot nor to talk to each other. (*To two gendarmes.*) You go into the hall and be on the lookout; don't wait till the bell rings! (*Two gendarmes go out into the ante-room. To others.*) You search all the rooms and bring everything, exactly as you find it here to me!

Gendarmes do as ordered and go about opening all wardrobes, drawers, boxes, etc. Bring a lot of books, unused printing paper, etc., and lay all on the sofa. While this is going on, Captain to Anton

Your name?

ANTON: Anton Tlatchoff.

CAPTAIN (*evidently surprised*): Ah, yes,—yes, indeed.

ANTON: 'Tis a mistake then, I believe.

CAPTAIN (*quickly*): Oh, no, no, 'tis all right, we'll

see at once! Certainly not—no hurry, just take it easy—easy— (*With a malicious smile.*) But why did you not want to let us in, my friends? Why lock yourselves in like this? Double doors even! (*No answer.*) We shall soon see—there's no hurry—take it easy—easy—

Anton, who is standing near the window, purposely knocks down the flower-pot with his elbow; it crashes to the floor and breaks in pieces.

CAPTAIN (*shouting*): Didn't I forbid you to move from the spot? Oh, no, my friend, 'tis of no use—that won't help.

ANTON (*ironically*): Don't you think it very close here? Wouldn't it be good to open the windows?

CAPTAIN (*decidedly*): The windows shall remain as they are—we know what that means—you are anxious about your visitors. (*Jeering.*) Don't worry about them, they will be well received. (*Pointing to the ante-room.*) They are expected and my men know how to do the honors of the house. (*Looking at the remains of burnt paper on the table.*) Everything burnt? So—hum—never mind—we shall soon see—there's no hurry—take it easy— (*Takes up the photo of the child which is lying on the table and hands it to a gendarme.*) Take everything and see that nothing gets lost.

SOFYA: It is the photo of my child. (*Frees herself from the gendarme and stretches out her hand for the picture.*) Please, please, give it to me!

CAPTAIN (*to gendarme*): Hold her. (*To Sofya.*) It must go with the other proofs. (*Looks over the*

collection of books and things and seems surprised at the amount of printing paper.) Have you been through all the rooms?

GENDARME: Yes, sir.

ANOTHER GENDARME (*goes up to the closet door, tries it—it opens*): Ah, a dark room—a store room.

Anton, Sofya and Masha are in consternation.

CAPTAIN (*angrily*): Do you see that, you clumsy creature? That's probably the best of all. (*Calmed.*) Easy—easy— (*Goes into the closet, followed by a gendarme; his voice is heard from the inside.*) Give me a light. (*The lamp, invisible to the audience, is taken off the closet wall and brought nearer, as can be judged by the measurement of the light.—Then in a pleased voice.*) Ah, so!—a nice little press—splendid—some type still in—splendid, splendid! (*Comes out of the closet and walks up and down the room rubbing his hands with satisfaction, stops before Anton and Sofya.*) Most successful. (*Malignantly.*) Congratulate you—but it was stupid of you to lock yourselves in—really very stupid. Condolences from the bottom of my heart—really I am sorry. How fine it is that there are first floors under second floors, isn't it? Now we'll see what kind of stuff you print. (*To a gendarme.*) Paper! (*Gendarme hands him some sheets which he takes into the closet and the sound of the printing press is heard, as in the beginning of act.*)

ANTON (*sorrowfully to Sofya*): My poor old machine in those dirty paws.

CAPTAIN (*comes back with the printed paper, holds*

it up to the lamp and reads): "The Light"—?! (*Looks at Anton and the two women in surprise, with a certain respect.*) So that's your work?! (*Rises again, takes a few steps up and down the room with a satisfied look on his face.*) Extraordinary—most extraordinary. (*Takes up paper again.*) But easy—take it easy— (*Is going to read paper again, but lays it down and says maliciously.*) The end then—"The Light" is out.

ANTON (*decidedly*): Yes, the twenty-seventh number of "The Light" will be out in a month.

CAPTAIN: We shall see about that! (*Sits down near the lamp and prepares to read.*)

ANTON: We know no obstacles—

Three short rings at the bell, noise out in the ante-room. Anton, Sofya and Masha exchange glances of concern.

GENDARME (*looking into the ante-room*): Somebody escaped, but they're after him.

CAPTAIN: They will soon catch the bird. (*Returning to the paper.*) Ah, an editorial. (*Reads, murmuring the lines to himself and nodding his head in assent.*) Quite right—quite right— (*Reading out loud.*) "He was the originator of the greatest evil in the world." (*To Anton.*) Orloff was quite right there—and you want to scorch him for it, do you? He was quite right—quite right— This inventor of printing—what was his name— (*Looks at the paper.*) Ah, yes, Guttentberg—if I ever go to Nuremberg, I shall also go to see his statue—to spit in his face for all the

evil he has worked in the world. That is my opinion of him.

Two gendarmes come in from the ante-room out of breath. Anton, Sofya and Masha furtively draw a sigh of relief.

FIRST GENDARME (*with a parcel in his hand like the one brought by Vasili earlier in the act*): He threw this thing at our feet and Paul stumbled and fell. (*Points to the second gendarme who holds a handkerchief to his nose and nods assent.*)

CAPTAIN (*excitedly to First Gendarme*): And you?

FIRST GENDARME (*mournfully*): He turned out the light on the stairs—and before I could get to the door—

CAPTAIN (*shouting*): Ass—cursed fool— (*To Anton, sternly.*) Who was it? (*No answer.*) You know who it was—tell me, I say— (*No answer.*) Oh, I'll soon make you speak. (*Aloud to himself.*) Such a pack!

Anton frees himself suddenly from the gendarmes and throws himself on the Captain, but is seized by the gendarmes and stopped; they hold him with difficulty during the Captain's next words.

CAPTAIN (*standing before him and hissing through his teeth*): What did you think you could do—you—you—miserable worm? (*Sofya sobs pitifully. To Sofya.*) Stop squealing!

MASHA (*enraged*): Why, we even daren't cry

without your permission? There are authorities yet above you.

CAPTAIN (*laughs loudly*): Ha—ha—ha— ~~Going~~
to complain, aren't you, little one? Ha—ha—ha—
With you people, we can do whatever we please. . . .

The curtain falls quickly.

ACT II.

A room, furnished in Bohemian style. In the middle a table, beside it two worn-out chairs; others of the same kind stand about the room in disorder. Against the left wall (in foreground) a shaky writing desk; in corner a wardrobe. Right a door, in foreground a shabby, old-fashioned sofa; in the very corner hangs a pair of trousers. In the back wall two windows. The left one looking into an open square, has a long, clear view. The perspective of the right window is cut off by a church standing opposite. It is afternoon.

Banker, 24 years old, slight, with exceedingly light hair and beard, the latter long and pointed. Has a perplexed look, and speaks in a suppressed voice. Clothes quite worn out; a coat of white duck, with large buttons, a high waistcoat, checked trousers of light color and battered hat.

Grigori, 28 years old, dressed as a factory hand and wearing an old red muffler around his neck. Gives an impression of superiority.

Junior, 19 or 20, wears uniform of a university student. Frequently raises his cap. Wears blue eyeglasses. When talking gesticulates excitedly, buttonholes the man to whom he is speaking, or walks in long strides up and down the room.

Doctor, about 35, earnest looking, long, black beard, deliberate movements; wears spectacles.

The above and Vasili are drinking tea and smoking ceaselessly. When the curtain rises they sit in meditation, with drooping heads, on the table, chair arms, window-sills, etc. Their talk grows rapidly animated, they interrupt one another, hurry, shout, run about the room.

JUNIOR (*looks at them and shakes his head*): Russian Hamlets. (*Bitterly.*) Heads down?! Pretty sight, fellows. I know quite well you would all like to blow your brains out; but if you don't want to drag on your lives any longer, you need not sell them cheaply for all that—get a good price for them before you go! (*Pause.*) Hold up your heads! Must I teach you, must I remind you of what you yourselves have taught me? Can't you see what is to be done, or have your hearts sunk into your boots? They mow us down heartlessly enough! The printing business broken up—arrests by the wholesale—houses searched—on the slightest pretence they drag us before the Court Martial. What else are you waiting for? Is there not enough electricity in the air to make the lightning flash? In the citadel our comrades are out on a starvation strike, and y o u, y o u are waiting! . . .

DOCTOR (*breaking in*): Let me finish, I am not through yet. What was the last straw in going out on strike, was that a young girl comrade, Masha—

VASILII (*quickly in an excited tone*): From the printing house? What about her?

DOCTOR: On the pretext that the prison regulations demanded an exact description of the arrested—

she was stripped naked before the gendarmes and warders.

JUNIOR (*passionately, although the others take no notice; while Doctor continues speaking*): Is not even that enough for you?!

DOCTOR: By means of wall tapping this spread among the prisoners on all sides—and when Tlatchoff heard of it, he made them take him straight to the commander of the citadel. The Governor General happened to be there at the time and Tlatchoff complained of it to him direct. But all he could get out of the Governor was: "If anything had happened . . . that, of course—would have been different—but (*ironically*) nothing has happened—no advantage was taken of the situation." These were the Governor General Rechnin's own words.

JUNIOR (*passionately*): Could it be more horrible?!

VASIL: Did you hear anything of Sofya Ivanovna? She was in the printing house, too.

DOCTOR: Ah, yes—she's in the prison hospital.

VASIL (*anxiously*): Is she ill?

DOCTOR: She chanced to find a piece of broken glass and tried to cut her throat with it, but the warder saw her through the peep hole and—she will be forced to go on living.

VASIL: Have you heard nothing more from that prison warder of yours, Doctor? Nothing about Anton?

DOCTOR: No, nothing more.

GRIGORI (*as if he were chairman*): Well, Banker, what's the state of the exchequer?

BANKER: Three thousand four hundred roubles have come in; two thousand of which a country judge, who did not wish his name to be known, sent us through Gavril, as our share of a legacy he had received.

JUNIOR (*passionately*): Don't you see even now, how broad and strong is the current of the political ferment? Put an end to this fatal hesitation and delay! Weaklings, not tyrants, are our destruction.

BANKER (*continuing*): Our expenses are very heavy just now. My manager has not sent me any money, but I expect five thousand roubles from him within the next few days. The new printing press cost over six hundred, and there is still the freight— —

GRIGORI: Ah, yes— I almost forgot— 'Tis already smuggled in. (*Hands a telegram.*) Here's the telegram.

BANKER (*reads*): "Marie well." (*Gives back the telegram.*) Have you found a suitable house yet?

GRIGORI: Two members of the Press Committee are hunting for a place, but a suitable one is difficult to find—

JUNIOR (*as before*): Why a printing house?!—A chemical laboratory rather!!

BANKER: We must make haste with the machine, though; the comrades in St. Petersburg can't do the printing for us much longer. Besides, bringing all the printed matter from St. Petersburg is too troublesome and inconvenient.

DOCTOR: The next issue of "The Light" must not be too late.

BANKER: Just as the strike was going on—such a piece of ill-luck!

JUNIOR: And I say—chemicals—chemicals—! It was gunpowder, not printer's ink, that freed the townspeople in the middle ages from the robber knights—It put men on a more equal footing—this democratic invention! And now we have a still more democratic—a still better help against the modern robber knights. What is perhaps poison for Europe, is for Russia a remedy!

DOCTOR (*soothingly*): You must learn to control yourself, Junior. (*With emphasis.*) We have had many experiences already, which have cost our predecessors dear—

JUNIOR (*scornfully*): Experience? . . . Experience is no more to me than last year's snow. Of what use is experience, when your body itches? Scratching is the only thing to do when itching and smarting become unendurable. When, like a mad dog in his frenzy, he is tearing thousands and thousands of innocent people—is it the teaching of your experience that he must not be removed?

DOCTOR: Common sense alone should forbid taking another man's life.

JUNIOR: Common sense must be met with common sense;—but the hangman's rope must be answered with dynamite. Why, even the Jesuits will not find any fault with us:—"The end justifies the means." (*All laugh quietly.*) If he is not a bit con-

cerned about so much blood of the Russian youth, that one tyrant's life more or less is not, really, of much account. But one less does withal count for much.

DOCTOR: Then another comes in his stead. (*With gesture.*) Labor of the Danaides.

JUNIOR: They must be overawed, as fright is the whole code of justice and morality.

BANKER (*contemptuously*): Pallid terror for the pitiable lives—the ghost of their own death is their lot of Achilles.

JUNIOR: In each government there is one of the few and a whole army of trained and blindly devoted ; darmes awaits his bidding— A pack of bloodhounds to hunt down tender human game.

VASILII (*rises*): It is time—to strike the bell of blood.

JUNIOR: Bravo, Vasili! The bell of blood. . . Yes, throughout the land in every government its shall sound, and waken to deeds all those who do not see clearly yet.

DOCTOR: But, Junior, first of all, cooler blood. If we want to use the present position to our advantage and overthrow the enemy, we must hold together with the others with a deadly grip—but I'm afraid the game is running away from us.

JUNIOR: Let them—the Liberals— Even as the fleas on them have already died off from a sudden death.

BANKER (*contemptuously*): Bourgeois will remain bourgeois—

JUNIOR: A slave ready to kiss the whip which has erstwhile checkered his body with stripes of shame.

BANKER: They protest against autocracy, but at the same time try for a mark for good conduct.

JUNIOR: Truly the fist clenches in anger and hatred against those who continually hold out these promises of help from above, which are not one whit better than the promises the popes give of a better after-life. By means of petitions and addresses they expect to get bliss from on high. As if somebody might be softened on high— (*Ironically.*) Promises are ready in plenty! —manifestos, projects for a Constitution, Councils of Ministers again and again. Let them wait—let them run away from us,—let them. . . . But I tell you, nothing is gotten for nothing. What you want you must take yourself. The slightest concession must be wrung out with blood. What you don't take yourself won't be yours, and so we will take it ourselves!

DOCTOR (*jeering*): How romantic—

JUNIOR: And do you call it thinking and acting at all practically to sleep away the most favorable time—until it is past—until it is too late—?! (*Impatiently.*) All around is asleep—! You are all too slow,—too heavy for me! Those thousand and one senseless considerations! Have you been so broken down by our last losses?! What a Rechin can do! . . . O, he is a past-master at it—! Can it possibly get worse?!

GRIGORI (*interrupting, while Junior goes on excitedly*): Keep calm—Junior—keep calm!

JUNIOR (*excitedly*): Every man has the right to kill a tyrant,—and no one—no people can take that

right from a fellow citizen! (*Throws himself exhausted into an armchair.*)

GRIGORI (*rather condescendingly*): Take it calmly, Junior—things are not so bad with us—and in the other governments they aren't asleep either. We are all of one mind, but don't need to intoxicate ourselves with talk. We are already past the stage—now is the time to think and act calmly. (*Turning to others.*) He is still boiling over with hot blood, but it will cool off. He will make a useful man of action yet. (*Smiling to Junior.*) We have stood his preaching most patiently and no one contradicted him;—after all it would have been difficult to contradict him— (*Turns to Doctor, with emphasis.*) But we are all unanimous in our convictions,—and not only since to-day,—are we not, Doctor?

DOCTOR: I fear we should not remain alone in the field—trifle away the co-operation of the Liberals—

GRIGORI: They will fight by our side in the end sooner or later they will get tired of entreating and waiting—

JUNIOR (*with disdain*): But of what use are they to us? They have hardly courage to whine out the hackneyed word "Freedom" even at a banquet.

BANKER: The red spectre is what they are afraid of

JUNIOR (*contemptuously*): A constitutional state with a Monarch at the head—that is their highest ideal—

BANKER: With knout and bayonet—as before!

GRIGORI: Now listen all of you! In my last letter to St. Petersburg I asked them to send us more men

because since our last heavy losses we have great need of experienced comrades, in spite of so many new volunteers coming in. The answer is, that they are not much better off themselves, and besides that, have much extra work on hand just now. We can't send you men—they write—for we have none to spare, but—bombs—as many as you like!

JUNIOR (*joyfully*): Bravo—do you hear that!


GRIGORI: They write further that they have had to send the same reply to all the other branches and—that there are no more obstacles in the way.

JUNIOR: Vasili—now the bell of blood will be set a-ringing—

GRIGORI: Wait a bit—

JUNIOR: But there are no obstacles now!

GRIGORI (*reprovingly*): You are forgetting the strike. (*Energetically banging the table with his hand.*) The strike must succeed—their courage was already beginning to sink—the strike committee, accordingly, decided upon the march. This afternoon they will gather in five churches for services of devotion—here, (*pointing through the window*) too, in the Catholic church of St. Anna. The five groups will then come together and go quietly home singing. This will strengthen afresh their feeling of solidarity. Only so can we go on. For this reason we must succeed to-day!—Yesterday I ran from tenement to tenement—things looked very promising—their spirits have risen to a high pitch. The march must succeed and must not be disturbed—otherwise they will lose all faith—then the cause will be in uttermost danger—



then we shall be forced to extremes. So I wrote to Rechin that if one of these days—I purposely wrote so, in order that he should not expect it to-day—that he should not interfere with the march of the strikers—that they will disperse to their own quarters in peace—but should he take it into his head to meddle with them, he will not escape the doom which he has deserved long since. I do hope he will give in this time—that governor of ours—else—the day after tomorrow there will be a farewell performance. (*All laugh.*) Don't laugh—the farewell performance of the danseuse Flora—

DOCTOR: Ah, his Flora!

GRIGORI: I have found out that he has promised to be present—he will leave the Opera after the ballet. The exit will be too well guarded, but he has to drive back either through Garden street or Castle street.—(*With quick decision.*) And I shall take the job on myself.—

JUNIOR: But at least two are necessary—one for Garden street and the other for Castle street—(*Joyfully.*) I shall be the second.

GRIGORI (*very earnestly*): We cannot spare you yet.

VASIL (who has already tried to speak, but has been interrupted by Junior. Quietly, but rather unsteadily): Brothers—I need a change of occupation! It is uncertain how long I must remain in hiding yet, in this quarantine, and I don't want to leave the town. I have given myself to the Cause—you know that—but, believe me, I am no longer of any use to you.

(Breaks off suddenly, then entreatingly.) Don't refuse me—I shall be doing myself, too, a great service by it. My hand is sure—you know me—I get the commission then.

Grigori silently shakes hands with him.

BANKER *(gets up and walks agitatedly about the room)*: That cursed money!

GRIGORI: Don't complain, Banker. Where should we be if it were not for your money? You are our strongest support.

BANKER: Yes, to sit quietly by and see you sacrificing yourselves!

GRIGORI: You will have your property confiscated by all means, won't you? You know what a blow that would be to us. Of course, if not for that fatal clause in your father's will—you would sell everything—we'd have the money—and then you would not need to deny yourself to the gallows, if you have such a longing for it. As the case stands you must live for us.

BANKER *(despairingly)*: And to sit calmly here and see you giving your lives—*(laughing bitterly)*—while I give money. . . .

GRIGORI *(with a hopeless gesture)*: You are incurable. *(To others.)* Now we must be going. You will come with me to headquarters, Junior—we must distribute a few more proclamations and appeals—you here at St. Anna's—*(Pointing to wardrobe.)* There you have boots and a blouse—you can change right here and lose no time.

JUNIOR: Grigori, instead of proclamations let us hand everybody a couple of dynamite pills and then

there will be no need of beseeching and threatening his Excellency the Governor General. Even if he were as meek as a lamb to-day, should we not— (*Breaks off.*) You will see, however.

GRIGORI (*on the point of going, hopefully*): The procession will go splendidly, you will see it— Good-bye, Vasili!— Doctor, come—you will go out by the other gate. (*Goes out with Doctor.*)

Junior has in the meantime put on a Russian workman's overalls and heavy top boots, and hung up his other things in the wardrobe.

Banker walks up and down the room impatiently, muttering to himself, then seizes his hat and coat, presses Vasili's and Junior's hands silently and goes out quickly.

JUNIOR (*calling after him*): Don't be down-hearted, Banker!

VASILY (*as Junior is going*): Can you give me anything to read?

JUNIOR (*pulls a magazine out of his pocket and hands it to Vasili*): Here, the latest number. Well, good-bye. . . . Oh, I had almost forgotten something. I had to betray your address to somebody yesterday.

VASILY: To whom?

JUNIOR: Anna Rikanskaya.

VASILY (*quickly, and with interest*): Did you speak to her? How is she?

JUNIOR: She was at headquarters yesterday. She has had to hold aloof ever since the uncovering of the printing house, and does not stay in her old lodgings any longer, but has to live here with an aunt in the

town. She feels so safe there that she risked coming to headquarters, and when she asked about you, I gave her your address.

VASILY (*reproachfully*): Why did you do that?

JUNIOR: She insisted.


VASILY (*pleased, but surprised*): Insisted? (*Remains lost in thought for some time.*)

JUNIOR (*goes toward door where he meets Arina who is just coming in*): Good-bye, old lady! Take good care of Vasili there—look after him as if he were the apple of your eye!

ARINA (*about sixty years of age, quite gray hair, rather bent, but otherwise hale and hearty*): I've had more important ones than him to look after—and nothin' happened to 'em.

JUNIOR (*laughing*): Yes—quite true—more important—(*To Vasili who is still sitting lost in thought and not listening*): She has served us for a generation at least, was the nurse of Alexey Ratloff, who was hanged in '85—and since then—(*Jokingly turning to Arina.*) If we had medals to give, she would have earned the order of St. Andrew's cross— But it is only the Tsar who has orders to give. (*Laughs.*) Good-bye. (*Goes out.*)

ARINA (*busying herself about the room, removing the glasses, etc. To herself, contemptuously*): The Tsar—the Tsar—the Tsar. (*Goes over to sofa where Vasili is sitting.*) How long will he hold out in this way? I have waited so long. (*As Vasili continues lost in thought and pays no attention,—with an*



aggrieved gesture.) Humph! (*Begins clearing the table again.*)

Vasili lies back on the sofa and whistles softly a melancholy Russian melody.

ARINA (*starts and looks at him. Kindly, shaking her head*): A little lonely, Vasili, ain't you? (*Vasili surprised, stops whistling and looks at her.*) Yes, yes, we know all about it, we do. Cryin' for the moon, that's it, someone's sitting up there on it. (*Vasili smiles assent. She continues triumphantly.*) Oh no, no one can cheat old Arina. (*Goes about the room tidying up.*) You are all alike, everyone of you—fine, brave young fellows as ever walked (*noticing the trousers hanging on the wall; scornfully*) but you always will hang your pants on the wall.—Dear—dear— (*Takes them down and fusses over them.*)

VASIL: When we have two pairs of them—

ARINA (*not listening, busy with the trousers*): All alike—everyone of 'em—

VASIL (*soothingly*): Don't scold, Arina. We can't help it—it's our nature.

ARINA (*hanging the trousers in the wardrobe*): I know, I know. As like as peas in a pod— (*Goes over to Vasili again.*) Have you ever heard of Alyoshka—Alexey Ratloff?

VASIL: What a question!

ARINA (*proudly*): I was his nurse. (*Sits down beside him, prepared for a talk.*) His poor mother died when he was born, and I got him to bring up. As fine a boy as ever lived—gentle as a girl he was, an' noble as a saint. But—(*shaking her head*) he had

fiery hot blood in his veins, he had, an' one night—a bitter dark night it was—just on the stroke of midnight—the gendarmes rushed in— (*furiously*) the cursed bloodhounds!—an' dragged him away, an' (*wailing and rocking herself*) we never set eyes on him again. Even his father wasn't allowed to see him—his hair turned as gray as ashes in one night. They would not let me see him either—told me they would put me in prison, too, if I came again. (*Brokenly.*) An' we never knew when he was taken afore the court, or when he died. (*Sobbing.*) They made him swing for it—an' he wasn't even twenty—Alyoshka—Alyoshka! (*Wildly.*) The murderers—I'll never forgive it—the butchers! (*Gradually calming down and drying her tears.*) An' what is your name—your family name?

VASILY: What does it matter what my name is? The comrades here call me Vasili—and when I am gone they will speak of Vasili—and the others don't need to know who it was.

ARINA (*nods her head thoughtfully and is silent for a minute, rises to go, but suddenly recalls something*): Dear, dear—I quite forgot—stupid old woman— (*To Vasili.*) The neighbor's lad from next door, Sasha—a fine young chap—he wanted to come to you afore, but I couldn't let him in. Now nothin' would please him, but I must ask you when he may come. All the young gentlemen here have been so fond o' him.

VASILY: Of course, he may come—any time he likes.

Three short rings at the bell.

ARINA: Dear, dear—someone for you. No one has had so many visitors as you. (*Shaking her head warningly.*) It ain't good.

VASILI: If it's a lady—let her in—you needn't ask anything.

Exit Arina.

Vasili, who has been waiting impatiently, runs to the door.

(*The following scene up to sign on page 60 may be omitted in performance.*)



Arina returns.

VASILI: Well, who was it?

ARINA: A gentleman.

VASILI (*disappointed*): What is his name?

ARINA (*tries to pronounce the name*): Eri. . . .
Kun. . . .

VASILI: Erich Kunze?

KUNZE (*bursts into the room at this moment. He is about 24 years of age, elegantly dressed, smoking jacket, patent leather boots, hair carefully brushed, moves about by fits and starts, a contrast to Vasili in every respect*): How are you, Vasili? (*Shakes hands heartily with Vasili.*)

Arina goes out.

VASILI (*astonished*): How did you find me out?

KUNZE (*throwing off his cloak*): Oh—I managed to get it out of Grigori, but it was the devil's own

ork. He did not wish to recognize me at all, but ran after him and shouted, and—(*defiantly*) he had stop.

VASILY (*still surprised*): So Grigori gave you my address?

KUNZE: Yes—but the number of ceremonies he had to go through before he gave it to me— First he looked round cautiously to see whether anyone was near, watching us or listening—and then I had to give him a thousand promises before he would say one word. But why have you changed your name? He did something about a quarantine—

VASILY: You see I had to take care of myself, in case I could be of use in some way.

KUNZE (*reproachfully*): And you left Paris in such a devilish hurry—not a word to a single soul. Our landlady told me simply that you had taken other quarters. There was still a whole month before the end of the university term.

VASILY (*ironically*): Oh, well, you see, our Tsar is so worried about us all. Everywhere, to Berlin, Vienna, London, Switzerland, to America even, and, of course, to Paris too—he sends guardian angels after us to see that nothing happens to us. And when one of us goes home there is a reception awaiting him at the frontier. But (*with a sarcastic laugh*) I didn't wish to be officially received, for I hate ceremonies—so I preferred to travel incognito, and be able to continue working.—

KUNZE: Terrible—terrible—

VASILY (*with ironical shrug of the shoulders*):

Easily explained. What you have had for generations, we have had to fight for—have had to pay with our heart's blood for the most elementary freedom. (*In an earnest tone.*) Christ suffered—every one of our comrades is a Christ in his way. (*Stands lost in thought for a minute.*) Man has but one life, but can buy so many for humanity with it.

KUNZE: I always liked you so much—you and Grigori, and the others. You were so different—quite different from the other fellows.

VASIL (sorrowfully): We have no youth. They tear it out of us before we are twenty. We are old—we are quite a different youth from yours in the West.

KUNZE (sympathizingly): It's shameful.

VASIL (bitterly): Yes, you sympathize with us in Europe, don't you? Perhaps even start beggarly subscriptions for us?—Ah, you mean well—you mean to be noble!—But where you have shed a pint of blood, we must shed whole seas of it. For a hundred years we have fought like this, and you look on—calmly and cynically—resting on your liberties. And our desperate struggling you watch only as a kind of horse race—who will win. And I really don't know, which is the favorite—the Russian people or the house of the Romanoffs. It is a stain on the nations of our day which they will never be able to wipe out!

KUNZE (lightly): But what can they do?

VASIL (glowing with hatred): Such an ulcer must be opened and the poisonous matter squeezed out, or it will infect the whole blood. The Russia of to-day is barbarity personified—an insult to Europe.

INZE (*impatiently*): Oh, as to that, they have their soiled linen of their own to wash over there.

SILI: Can't you see that our enemy is your —the enemy of all culture and progress? (*Bit-*

But our fight is only a keen sensation to you—stimulation of the nerves. You are entertained by the Roman Plebs used to be amused when the Christian martyrs were thrown into the arena to be torn to pieces by the tigers.

INZE (*looking at his watch, jokingly*): I think I'll call again when you are in a better mood, my fellow! I must be off now—I'm due at Baron Korsoff's at 5.20.

SILI (*with interest*): Baron Korsoff? How did you get to know him?

INZE: Met him in Ostend last year, and we became fast friends.

SILI: That's a piece of luck. He's very thick with the commander of the citadel, so (*with determination*) you must help us.

INZE: You know I was never able to refuse anything, but— (*smiling*) I've no desire to learn the inside of your prisons personally. (*Begins to put on cloak.*)

SILI: Oh, you need have no fear; our people know how to arrange everything— (*Shakes Kunze's*

Well, come again to-morrow—pretty early, eleven o'clock—but be cautious—that is, let me be seen in the streets with Baron Korsoff as far as possible—then you can come here in safety—how do you happen to be in these parts at all?

KUNZE (*drawing on his gloves*): Passing through on my way to Baku (*with mock-gravity*) as agent for machine manufacturers in Brussels. (*Changing the tone.*) But you have no idea how glad I was when I knocked against Grigori and got out of him that you—too—were here. Well, in two months I hope to be back—

VASILI (*shaking his head*): Back there, to Europe— Tell that lady, Dame Europe, that it is high time she threw away those Russian crinolines of hers—they are no longer in fashion now! She may trip over and hurt herself.—

KUNZE (*laughing*): All right—I'll deliver you ~~all~~ compliments— So long— (*Goes out.*)

VASILI (*calling after him*): You'll be up to-mo-~~row~~ row then?— — — (*Turns over the pages of the maga-~~zine~~ zine which Junior had left him.*)



(*End of cut for performance.*)

(*Tap at the door, he calls out.*) Come in. (*Enter Sasha.*) Ah, Sasha. (*Holds out his hand kindly.*)

SASHA (*about 16 years old, in the costume of a Russian college boy, gives his hand shyly to Vasili*): You will excuse me?— (*Takes a book out of the inside pocket of his coat and hands it to Vasili.*) Thank you ever so much—I really cannot thank you enough.

VASILI: Finished it already?

SASHA: Have read it twice.

VASILI: You don't say—

SASHA: Why, I actually swallowed the book. (*Shyly.*) Please—Vasili Ivanovich—do they take in anyone? Would they take me too?

VASILY (*kindly*): What is Sasha up to? What-ever got into your head?

SASHA (*passionately*): I wish I could tear off this uniform and—and go and join them and work with them. Something seems to draw me to them—I can't help it. (*Despairingly.*) Still two years more before I graduate—that's such a long time—I can't wait so long—

VASILY: Sasha has time enough yet—mustn't do anything rash, Sasha.

SASHA (*almost crying*): Poor mother—she'll be terribly grieved—but I must—— (*Vasili looks at him with appreciation and sympathy.*) I wanted to show the book to the other boys and read bits to them—to let them, too, enjoy it. I want to talk about it to everyone, but instead of that I must keep it hidden in my pocket, so that no one shall see it, and watch that it doesn't fall out. To hide such a book, isn't it a shame?!

From the church opposite comes the sound of an organ; which stops after a minute, but is heard again from time to time. They both stop and listen.

SASHA: How loud the organ sounds here—in our part we can't hear it at all. (*Goes over to left window and looks out.*) Many people are going to St. Anna's church this evening. (*Coming back to the table, where he takes up the magazine, turns over the pages and gazes for a time at the pictures in it, delightedly.*)

That is—Sofya Perofskaya—is it really she? (*Continues gazing at the picture, then suddenly sobs aloud.*)

VASILY (*anxiously*): What's the matter, Sasha?

SASHA: The teacher said to-day that nihilists are scoundrels and the scum of society—and I had to sit still and listen and say nothing. I thought of mother—I have to give lessons to help to keep her— (*Tries to master himself, but cannot.*) I must go— — — I'll come another time. . . . (*Covers his eyes with his arm and goes out quickly.*)

Vasili, much moved looks after him and shakes his head; moves about the room, muttering, then goes to the window and looks out, turns away from window, sighs deeply and sits down on the sofa, holding his hands behind his head, and whistles the same Russian melody as before. After a while breaks off and stares into space. The organ sounds. A knock at the door, but he does not hear it.

Anna, in hat and jacket, comes softly in, notices Vasili on sofa, goes on tip-toe around the table and comes up to him from left side. Vasili on seeing her springs up quickly, runs towards her and presses her hands silently.

ANNA (*takes off her hat and jacket, gaily*): Aren't you surprised to see me?

VASILY (*in a hollow voice, passionately*): I expected you.

ANNA (*astonished*): You expected me? Im-

possible— (*Smiling and threatening playfully.*) Getting conceited. . . .

VASILY (*as before*): For ten days without ceasing—I have called for you.

ANNA (*smiling, jokingly*): Your calling didn't reach me then. (*More seriously.*) I simply couldn't bear the quarantine any longer. Imagine—I went to the printing house as usual—looked up at the window—no flower-pot!—Fortunately the janitor wasn't at the door, so I turned at once and ran straight to headquarters. There I was told of the disaster. At once I got my leave off duty—they had heard that the blue-coats were ransacking the whole town with the janitor Semyon for the "French teacher." So I rushed to my room—packed up my bag and baggage—told my landlady I had to go to Petersburg—and drove straight to my aunt's in Garden Street— —

VASILY: In Garden Street?

ANNA: Yes, anything strange in that?

VASILY: Not far from the opera house?

ANNA: No. We can see the opera house from the windows. (*Continuing her story.*) My aunt was delighted to see me, and overwhelmed me with questions about St. Petersburg. The dear old lady has no idea that I've been here for the last six months. Her husband is a treasury official and of course a sworn enemy of the Socialists. I have to laugh to myself sometimes—but I am as safe there as in God's keeping. But its terrible to sit idle like this—so far away from the Cause—to know nothing of what happens—or what our people do. Not even to know who are still

alive— (*Impatiently.*) At last I couldn't bear it any longer, so I went to headquarters again and heard there that (*reproachfully*) you were still here; go to your address— —

VASILY (*interrupting her; with suppressed joy*) : You are so—so different to-day, Anna!

ANNA (*tenderly*) : The poor fellow too—I thought to myself—is suffering like myself, to be sure—

VASILY (*as before*) : Then it wasn't only for the Cause you came here—?

ANNA (*shaking her head*) : Its ten days now—Vasili, isn't it? (*Teasingly.*) And of course you were lo-onging—

VASILY (*confused and pained*) : Anna, you are making fun of me. (*Quickly.*) Has Sofya been talking?

ANNA : Why, what do you mean?

VASILY : Nothing—nothing at all— (*Walks about excitedly.*)

ANNA (*with painful recollections*) : Sofya—poor, poor Sofya—Masha—Anton— What is happening with them now? Have you no news of them—know nothing?

VASILY (*roughly*) : My God—what does it matter?

ANNA (*horrified*) : Vasili, what are you saying?

VASILY (*bitterly*) : The Cause—Anna—the Cause before everything. What does it matter about human beings?

ANNA (*grieved*) : What has happened, Vasili? I don't recognize you—I almost begin to doubt— —

VASILY : Your doubts will soon disappear, Anna.

ANNA (*reproachfully*): Vasili, why are you still here? Why are you not gone yet? (*Anxiously.*) You know the gendarmes are hunting for you—any moment you may fall into their hands.

VASILY: I would have been there with Anton, Sofya and Masha for certain, if not— — (*Breaks off.*)

ANNA: If not—what?

VASILY: If not— (*passionately*) for you — —

ANNA (*taken aback, closes her eyes, slowly*): If not— — for me— —

VASILY (*expectantly*): Yes. . . . (*After a minute, hesitatingly.*) I should never have left them—there—in the printing house. . . .

ANNA (*recovering herself, quickly*): And even if so, do you regret it? You have no right to be so reckless. Such as you are necessary.

VASILY (*smiling bitterly*): Necessary. . . . (*Threateningly.*) Yes, I am necessary, but here—now!

ANNA (*anxiously*): Vasili, what is wrong with you?

VASILY (*ironically*): Are you anxious about me?

ANNA (*sadly*): How cruel you are. . . .

VASILY (*as before*): It is all for the Cause—Anna Andrejevna.

ANNA (*struggling with herself*): Oh, you torture me—

VASILY (*still as before*): Still as fond of declaiming as ever?

ANNA (*lowering her eyes and struggling to keep*

back her tears, whispers reproachfully): Vasili! Vasili!

VASILII (*remorsefully, walking about excitedly with long steps*): I don't know what I am talking about—forgive me—Vasili is no longer—it is quite another creature you see before you—(*Throws himself into an armchair, plaintively.*) What has become of him—the Vasili of a few months ago?

ANNA: The Vasili of iron!

VASILII (*pained*): Not of iron, but of straw I tell you—set ablaze by a foolish, ridiculous little flame—while the great, holy fire leaves him cold. (*Determined; striking the table angrily with his hand.*) But he will smother the flame—this stupid, useless little flame—(*Despairingly, in a low voice.*) Where is the old Vasili? (*Throws his head back and rests it on the back of his chair.*)

Organ sounds.

ANNA (*comes up from behind and strokes his hair with both hands*): Vasili, what has happened—? (*Tenderly.*) Be yourself again!

VASILII (*beseechingly, with closed eyes as Anna is about to take her hands away*): Oh, don't take your hands away—let them go on stroking my hair. (*In a reverie.*) My God—this peace—this heavenly peace—(*Opens his eyes suddenly—struggles with himself as if wanting to speak out; whispers.*) Anna! (*Seizes her hands suddenly, presses them to his head, draws them slowly and gently over his face to his mouth and kisses both palms reverently.*)

ANNA (*listens to his words with a blissful smile.*)

VASILI (*moans; exhausted*): Anna, what have you made of me—of my soul— A rag—so crumpled—so tattered! (*After a minute, he suddenly lets her hands go, gets up and walks feverishly up and down the room.*)

Anna, startled at first, stands for a moment, then sits down near the table with her back to the window.

VASILI (*standing at the window, not daring to look at her; a despairing hopelessness in all his movements. The first words come slowly and with difficulty, then ever more quickly*): Don't be angry with me—don't laugh at me—or rather—(*movement of indifference*) laugh as much as you like, it's all the same to me. I have nothing more to lose. I know—only in the old novels love is the principal object of life—but I am helpless—seem to myself like the most stupid of Romeos.— I've fought against it, but in vain. I shall not kneel at your feet—nor offend your ears with the banal "I love you." I shan't talk of your eyes and your hair—we are earnest human beings, not troubadours. But this much I must tell you, (*passionately*) life without you is torture to me—I can't drag on any longer— I'm not a child, nor a allow youth— I know there are perhaps many others like you, that you are no special exception—but my soul is drawn to you by some irresistible power—utterly beyond my control. You have set my whole nature topsy turvy— I am not the same as before—worse I am. (*Breaks off, in a quieter tone.*) You came every day there—to the printing house.— It

was like being martyred over a slow fire— I ran away—tried to escape—but it was useless.— This is not a freak of fancy—it is a yearning,—so intense, so elemental—pulling and driving me with irresistible force.— If this is love—then love is—hell!

ANNA (*who has been deeply moved and listened to his words with a blissful smile, turns to him, and indulgently, tenderly*): Poor man—but do come nearer—

Vasili by her side at a bound.

ANNA (*raising both her hands upwards and grasping his head. He yields as if without will power and automatically kneels beside her. Anna teasing, but tenderly*): Will you be good then?—will you keep out of mischief?—will you be the strong Vasili you used to be?

Vasili utterly helpless, his head in her hands, gazes at her in transport.

ANNA (*as if speaking to a babe*): Ah—you silly boy— (*Slowly bends down to his head, which she holds with both hands—until their lips meet in one long passionate kiss. Meanwhile Vasili, whose arms have been hanging down loosely, spreads them out sidewise, cross fashion, and is raising the upper part of his body, as if trying to press his lips still closer to hers. She draws his head away from her lips and holds it with her hands right before her own face. They exchange a long, deep glance. Tenderly.*) Silly—silly boy. . . .

VASILI (*nestling closer to her, beseechingly*): Ah, don't speak—I only want to feel you near me. Oh,

yearning of my life—before I saw you I longed for you—my whole—life—long— (*Lifts his head up after a minute and gazes at her.*)

ANNA (*tenderly*): Why did not the poor boy tell me before? How could you keep silent so long—?

VASILY (*sadly*): Did you not guess? Could you sleep while my yearning and longing were stretching out to you their long arms through the night? They were caressing you—but so softly, so tenderly,—that you didn't awake—

ANNA: Have you suffered—that much?

VASILY (*as if awakening*): It is really you—Anna—this is not madness? (*Putting his arms around her, aloud.*) Anna Rikanskaya? I am not dreaming? Is it true—is it possible? It is Anuta. (*Complainingly.*) Why had I to suffer so much? Why does it come so late?

ANNA: Vasili! can happiness ever be too late—?


VASILY (*earnestly*): It can come too late. (*Movement as if he were chasing away unpleasant thoughts.*) But I have it—and—nothing else matters!

ANNA (*jokingly*): Who would say that Vasili, the unbending, the iron Vasili—could be kneeling? (*Both laugh.*)

VASILY: Dear one!—but you are charming! (*Kisses her fingers one after the other.*)

ANNA (*laughing*): And who would say that serious people like us would be kissing? (*Both laugh again happily.*)

From the street below comes the roar of a big crowd.



VASILY (*looking Anna steadily in the eyes, anxiously*): Oh, my happiness—my sweet young happiness! (*Closes his eyes and makes a movement of the hand as if trying to catch something in the air. The noise in the street becomes louder and louder.*) It escapes me—it is flying away—going—going—I will not lose it!

ANNA (*reproachfully, putting her hand over his mouth*): Vasya—Vasili. (*Listens.*) What is happening down there?

VASILY (*quickly and carelessly*): The strikers gathered at the different churches—here at St. Anna's, too—and are about to return—marching to their homes—

ANNA (*in joyful surprise*): Ah! I had no idea—I have heard nothing for so long. Let us stand at the window, come.

The noise grows ever louder.

VASILY (*beseeking, with anxiety*): No, no—don't go—my young happiness. (*To himself.*) Don't rob me of it—

ANNA: But Vasili—let go. (*Kisses him on the forehead and stands up.*) Come on, do—

VASILY (*still kneeling; makes the same movement again as if trying to catch something; moaning*): Yes—it is slipping from me—slipping away—

From the street comes the sound of singing, swelling louder and louder as more voices join in; then gradually softer, as the crowd marches across the square.

ANNA: Do you hear?

VASILY (*springing up—despairingly*): Why are they singing?! I should like to run down and shout to them: "Disperse!—there is disaster ahead!" (*Stands with Anna at the left window and both look out.*)

ANNA: Look, Vasili, how splendid—the people in their majestic calmness—compelling respect. How confidently they march! Whence this calmness? as if it were not in the land of the Tsar—as if they had no idea of knouts and of Cossacks. Vasya, dear—our labors have not been in vain! I see already the dawn of to-morrow; Vasya—how happy I am! (*Nestles close up to him.*)

VASILY (*in horror*): Anuta—don't you hear—riders—horses—

ANNA: Mere fancy—apparitions—you are so nervous, so excited.

VASILY: My soul is seized with horror— (*Despairingly.*) Anuta, I will not, I cannot lose you— (*Presses her hand to his heart.*)

ANNA (*stroking his cheek*): But Vasya, dearest—be calm—look at the workmen down there—look at their worn faces; what an unconquerable faith illumines them, that the morrow belongs to them!

Pause. They continue looking out of the window.

ANNA (*with sudden horror*): I now really believe I hear something. Look! Riders—over there—on the left side of the square.

Vasili looks out of the window in the direction she points, then springs back to the middle of the room and leans against the back of an arm-chair,

listening as if expecting something terrible to happen.

ANNA (*continues looking out into the square, stretching her hand out backwards to Vasili; in horror*): The riders are making straight for them—(*After a moment.*) But they are marching on—ahead—listen, Vasili—they keep on singing—they are not wavering—not flying. (*Running joyfully to him.*) Vasili—don't you hear—they are still singing—they are not afraid of the rifles—they are pressing forward——

The crowd is heard moving across the square and disappearing in the distance, but the song is still distinctly heard.

VASILI (*as if wishing to reassure himself*): They are joining the processions from the other churches.

ANNA (*joyfully*): Listen, Vasili—they are still singing.

VASILI (*as before*): Nothing can happen to them, can it, Anuta? They will disband quite peacefully by themselves—they will—they will.

ANNA (*in ecstasy*): Vasili—they are still singing!

ARINA (*comes in softly and steals to the left window, pointing with outstretched hand. With deep feeling*): Do you hear it? It is the song my Alyoshka used to sing. (*Opens the window; the song now sounds louder; then slowly dies away.*) It's a fine song, isn't it? And how he used to sing it—but always softly—softly—for fear his father should hear.

ANNA (*triumphantly*): And to-day—to-day it is sung in the open street——

ARINA (*tries first to join in the singing, but fails; then speaks the words awkwardly, but with meaning and impression and growing enthusiasm, and in time with the rhythm of the melody, which flows from the street into the room and is still clearly to be heard*):

“O’er Monarchs’ thrones wave banner and pennon;
 Redly they glow—Ye Tyrants, take care!
 Crimson ye’ve dyed them—to roaring of cannon,
 In innocent blood! Be warned! Beware!”

Anna looks at her in surprise and whispers together with Arina the next stanza. Vasili chimes in with a few random words dreamily as if entirely absent-minded.

“And wilder, wilder grows our wrath at cruel night!
 And higher, higher faith, to win the cruel fight!
 And ever, ever more——”

A volley of rifle shots is heard in the distance. Vasili gives a cry of despair. Anna grasps her head with her hands in horror. Arina slowly sinks her head upon her breast, dries the tears stealthily from her eyes and softly steals out of the room. Anna and Vasili stand as if turned into stone. The song in the street stops, and in the distance there is sound of a great tumult—an unsuccessful attempt is made to start the song again—detached snatches of the melody are heard.—Another volley.

VASILII (*beseechingly*): A-nu-ta!

Twilight has gradually crept into the room.

A third volley.

VASIL (with trembling voice): A-nu-ta—

ANNA (wrathfully): Our patience won't hold out much longer—we must work now with double fervor—

VASIL (brokenly): Anuta—stop—don't torture—

ANNA (approaches slowly; anxiously): Cold drops on your brow—Vasili. (Tenderly.) Vasya!

VASIL (dully): I'm cold—I'm cold—come nearer—nearer— (Anna comes quite close to him; closes his arms slowly around her.) I must hold you fast. A terrible inexorable power is tearing you from me— But I will not lose you— (As if beseeching someone.) Don't take her from me—don't take her. . . . (After a minute, slowly.) It was but a dream—It is over—over—

ANNA: Vasili—you remember the little song they used to sing in the Latin Quarter? (Slowly.) "Life is vain—A little joy—A troubled dream—And then good-bye. . . ."

VASIL (automatically): "And then good-bye. . . ."

A short pause. It is almost dark.

VASIL (whispers, as if awaking): Anuta—

ANNA: What is it, Vasili?

VASIL: Stay with me, Anna—don't leave me—don't leave me.

ARINA (bursts into the room, wailing): Heavens! how terrible—how terrible! They've brought Sasha home—pierced through and through—a bayonet through his body—

VASIL (wildly): Sasha—Sasha—— (*Runs about the room in great excitement.*)

ARINA: Oh me—oh me—his poor mother—I must go to her! (*Goes out quickly.*)

ANNA: So much suffering and pain all around.

VASIL (*running up and down, distractedly*): Anuta—let us run away—let us fly—Anuta—quick! (*Breaks off. After a moment to himself as if in prayer.*) But—one more—moment—of peace—— (*Stops walking about.*) Not—yet——

Three short rings at the bell.

VASIL (*shouts*): Not yet! (*Then, quickly whispering.*) Not yet—not yet. . . .

ANNA: Somebody rang the bell—it is for you——

VASIL (*as before*): Not yet—not yet——

ANNA: Vasili, Arina has gone to the neighbors. Somebody rang the bell.

Vasili, almost broken down, goes slowly to the door. Anna goes to the left window and looks out, so that Grigori, who enters with Vasili, does not see her in the dim light. Grigori and Vasili stand at the door and speak hurriedly in suppressed voices.

GRIGORI (*speaks as if he were just on the point of going*): There's no time to lose—I must be off for the train at once. Everything will be ready at the right time—I shall bring proclamations and appeals with me. We must——

VASIL (*echoing*): We must——

GRIGORI: Can you ask? They are putting up the barricades over yonder—the street is flowing with

blood—no way of telling how many killed. The day after to-morrow, then——

VASILI (*echoing the word, sadly*): The day after to-morrow. . . .

GRIGORI (*astonished, but sternly*): You are flinching?

VASILI (*after a minute, with closed eyes, suppressing his pain, decisively*): No. . . .

GRIGORI: Vasili,—what is it—what has happened?

VASILI (*determined*): Nothing. The day after to-morrow, then!

GRIGORI: In Garden Street and Castle Street—will——

VASILI (*quickly*): I shall take Garden Street——

GRIGORI: Good—as you please. Everything will be ready. Take care of yourself—good-bye. (*Shakes hands with him and goes out quickly.*)

Vasili stands at the door looking after Grigori, as if rooted to the spot.

ANNA (*coming softly up to him*): What was it about?

VASILI (*mechanically*): Nothing—nothing—nonsense—only a trifle.

They sit down on the sofa together.

ANNA: But you are trembling, Vasili— (*She takes his head between her hands.*)

VASILI (*bending down to her, pressing closely to her, slowly*): Let me rest—on your bosom—my poor—head——

ANNA (*softly*): But do calm yourself—Vasya!

VASILI (*tired*): Shield me. . . .

ANNA (*loosens her hair and covers his head with it*): Go to sleep, Vasili. . . .

VASILI (*as though through sleep*): How blissfully—fragrant—your—hair——

ANNA: Sleep—poor man. . . .

VASILI (*imploringly*): A little while only——

ANNA: Sleep, my boy, sleep——

VASILI: But one moment more—but one moment——

ANNA: Hush . . . sh . . . sh

(*Curtain falls slowly.*)

ACT III.

A modestly furnished drawing-room. Left— a table, chairs and a small sofa; near by a small table with a samovar and tea glasses. Right—an old-fashioned side bureau on which, amongst other things, are two candlesticks with candles. On each side, right and left—a door. In the background, a bay-window. It is evening.

Varvara, Tanya, Maria and Anna are drinking tea at the table, on which stands a bottle of brandy, glasses, cake, etc.

MARIA (a married lady of 32, in afternoon dress and hat): Have you been here that long, Anna Andreyevna?

VARVARA (about 45 years old): It must be at least a fortnight since you came, isn't it, Anuta?

ANNA: Yes, it must be quite two weeks. The time goes so quickly, Auntie.

MARIA: How do you like being here?

VARVARA: She hardly goes out at all.

ANNA: I only came to see Auntie—it is so nice here.

TANYA (about twenty, also in afternoon dress and hat). You're quite right—it's not at all pleasant to walk in the streets nowadays. Everywhere you go—suspicious-looking figures and soldiers—

Anna and Tanya continue the conversation be—

tween themselves and promenade about the room together.

VARVARA (*to Maria, who is sitting beside her on the sofa*): She seems to have no desire to go out, except the last few days when she visited a friend of hers who came with her from St. Petersburg. The poor creature has been ill and Anna had to sit with her till very late the night before last—and I was so terribly worried—it was just at the time of the bloody street riots—it was awful.

MARIA: It isn't much better to-day.

VARVARA (*dismayed*): Why, what is the matter? What is the matter?

MARIA: Searching everywhere—in every house—they burst in wherever they please.

VARVARA (*with increasing anxiety*): Searching?! (*Grasps her head with her hands.*)

MARIA: My neighbor is going abroad with her children to-morrow—

VARVARA (*as before*): What is up?

MARIA: And says she will not come back to Russia until passports aren't needed any more.

VARVARA (*as before*): Is it really so bad?

MARIA: Her husband is a lawyer—and he says there's still worse to come!

VARVARA: But it has been quieter since the day before yesterday, hasn't it?

MARIA: But, my dear Varvara Sergeyevna. . . . They say the troopers have been simply ravaging the suburbs and blood is flowing in rivers! Even here in

town it is not safe to walk in the streets. (*They continue talking together.*)

ANNA (*who has been talking to Tanya with whom she has been standing in the bay-window*): When still at the college I sometimes used to come here to visit my aunt.

TANYA: And now you are studying in St. Petersburg?

ANNA (*a little embarrassed*): Yes.

TANYA: Somehow I have an impression as if I saw you somewhere not long ago—here in town—

ANNA (*as before*): It only seems to you so— isn't it?

TANYA: Ah—University life! That must be beautiful—lectures every day—so many people about—that has always been my dream.

ANNA: Why have you never made it a reality?

TANYA (*lowering her voice*): We had a terrible case in our family.

ANNA: What was that?

TANYA: Our brother was a student and took part in the disturbances—they sent him to Siberia—it is three years ago now. But since that time none of us dares to mention the university to father. (*Changing the conversation quickly; looking out of the bay-window.*) What a pretty view you have from here.

ANNA (*carelessly*): Yes—the park— (*Looking through the window.*) And there is the Opera House.

TANYA (*looking through the left pane of the bay-window*): And from this side the whole of Garden

Street. How far the row of lamplights stretches! But the street is so dark for all that—I should be afraid to walk alone over there on the park side. (*They stand looking out of the window.*)

Maria has in the meantime been talking to Varvara, and now after some hesitation draws a folded piece of printed paper slowly and carefully from her pocket.

VARVARA (*noticing this and bending towards her; inquisitively*): What is that?

MARIA: It was lying on the stairs—I saw several of them in the houses as I came along, and when I came into your house here was one also. I had to pick it up—I couldn't help it—but it's burning a hole in my pocket! I daren't take it home.— Good heavens, if my husband were to find it! I should just like to read it quickly through—and then lay it on the stairs again.

VARVARA: Let me see it, dear Maria—I should like to read it, too. Probably it is an appeal from the revolutionists.

They bend over paper and begin to read, when suddenly Natalya's voice is heard outside. Maria puts the paper nervously into her pocket again.

NATALYA (*Comes in from right. She is about 45 years old. Old-fashioned in dress, but tries to look younger. Energetic, almost manly movements. Talks quickly, swallowing tea and eating one cake after another all the time. Bustles in importantly*): Well, my dears, how are you all? (*Greets Varvara and Maria.*)

VARVARA (*introducing Anna*): My niece from St. Petersburg—Anna Rikanskaya.

NATALYA (*shakes hands with Anna and Tanja, and sits down at the table; Varvara hands her a glass of tea*): Just think, my dears, what excitement I've had—I, the wife of a colonel of gendarmes—I've just been stopped in the street by some strolling soldiers with nothing better to employ their time.— Now, tell me, do I look like a dangerous person?—do I look like a Socialist?— Let them catch their Socialists as much as they like, but they might be taught to leave decent people alone! Just think of it—the vagabond pack demand a passport and ask what money I have. But I was equal to them! I soon told them whom they had to deal with—gave my name—and you should have seen them.—A young whipper-snapper of an officer came up and saluted and poured out a hundred excuses, and then they took themselves off.— An elegant young fellow he was, though. But it has put me in such a state of excitement—terrible! (*Swallowing some tea.*) Really an elegant young fellow.— (*Changing suddenly.*) But why have you not been to see us, Varvara Sergejevna? I'm angry with you—I've just come for a moment—I'm on my way to the Opera, but it's too soon yet.

VARVARA: My husband is also going to-night.

NATALYA: And how about yourself?

VARVARA: I'm not in the mood for it to-night—a headache—in any case there are no more tickets to be had. My husband is going with a lot of other Treasury officials.

NATALYA: It is going to be grand. They say the Governor General is also going to be present.

IVAN PAVLOVICH (*Comes in from left. A man of about 50, dressed in the uniform of a Russian government official. Iron-gray hair, brushed very flat and glossy, large moustache, otherwise clean-shaven; good, straight figure, rather red nose. He is already in very good spirits,—but helps himself continually to brandy from the bottle on the table*): Good evening, ladies. How are you? (*Shakes hands with them all.*)

NATALYA: I hear you're going to the Opera to-night, too, Ivan Pavlovich?

IVAN: Of course, we must honor Flora to-night. A lot of us have joined together and taken three boxes. (*With great reverence.*) His Excellency the Governor General will be very pleased!

NATALYA: I suppose there is to be a great ovation?

IVAN: Of course! We're going to unhitch the horses——

NATALYA: Who—you gentlemen? I thought that was for the youths to do——

IVAN (*in disgust*): Ah—gracious!—the youths of to-day! . . . They are good for nothing—poisoned with those new, mad, European ideas. It makes a sensible person mad to hear them talk! (*Proudly.*) No, we shall take the horses out ourselves.

ANNA: What a great honor for her! Why does she get it?

IVAN (*looking reproachfully at her*): The Governor General will be satisfied. . . . Besides, she

has deserved well of our country. (*Drinks.*) Just think of it, ladies—he always used to receive us in his morning-gown—even the highest officials.—But since she has come and he has been visiting her every morning, he receives with a coat on, as he does not want to bother taking it off again, and so—thanks to her—he officiates now—as should be—in a uniform.— But that is not all— (*Drinks.*) Don't forget—she makes life more pleasant for such a man—such a pillar of Mother Russia. What should we do without him? These Socialists or Nihilists or whatever they call themselves, would have got the better of us long ago. He knows how to manage them!— (*Fills his glass.*)

VARVARA: Perhaps you would like a little tea?

IVAN. (*brusquely*): No, thanks! (*Empties his glass.*) He'll shoot, hang, or scatter them to all the corners of the earth—and then the air will be clean!—None but expelled students and Jewish scamps!

ANNA (*who is sitting at the small table in the right corner with Tanya*): But Ivan Pavlovich! They are the most wretched part of the youth.

IVAN (*turning to her in surprise*): Then it serves them quite right. . . . But it's a pity you waste your sympathy on them.— Do you know if you weren't the niece of my wife, I might begin to have my suspicions even about you?

Anna makes a movement of indifference with her hand and continues looking at an album with Tanya, without paying any attention to the rest of the conversation.

IVAN (*turning to the elder ladies at the table; in a suppressed voice so as not to be heard by Anna*): You see, ladies, it is a perfect epidemic—quite decent people lose their heads and get entangled and then annoy our little father the Tsar with all kinds of appeals and petitions and such nonsense. (*Fills his glass again.*)

VARVARA (*insisting*): Won't you really have some tea?

IVAN (*scornfully*): No, no—I prefer this. (*Drinks, then continues.*) Such men as the Governor General are very necessary. He will soon put things in order—as he did the day before yesterday.

MARIA (*horrified*): Beautiful order, I must say, if there's more bloodshed to-day.

IVAN: What blood? That's no blood at all!—Scoundrelly pack—workmen and such creatures!

MARIA: Have you not heard, though, that the railway and bank officials joined the strike yesterday?

IVAN: But my dear Maria Nikolayevna—they're all of the same lot! They won't work, and call it a strike to go about the streets singing and disturbing respectable citizens. I wanted to sleep a little the other day—I was just the least bit seedy—had been to a christening the night before at the house of one of my colleagues and could not help drinking a little more than usual—twins had arrived,—in short, I was feeling rather seedy and wanted to rest quietly, when suddenly the pack began to sing, and so loud at that. (*Fills his glass.*)

VARVARA (*beseechingly*): Hadn't you better take tea?

IVAN (*angrily*): Oh, don't bother me with your tea! I'm taking brandy!

VARVARA: But how will you go to the theatre if you drink so much?

IVAN: You know, my dear, that I can stand it well enough. Besides, when all the others are in high spirits, why should I be an exception? (*Quickly changing.*) But what were we talking about? Yes, of course, the Socialists! What they want, you know, is to have a State in which everyone is equal. Now what do you say to that? There will be large shops of all kinds and everyone has just to step in and help himself to what he wants; there is to be a huge barrel of spirits, too, and glasses standing round, so that any one can have a drink when he likes—just like those penny-in-the-slot restaurants, except that you don't need to put in a penny. And this State, if you please, is to have no public officials—imagine it—without us—what would Russia be without us? Nothing—nothing—nothing.— (*Drinks his brandy and fills his glass immediately.*) I always get excited when I talk about them. (*Empties his glass.*)

NATALYA (*mysteriously*): I have heard that their clubs are generally near churchyards—under the ground.

IVAN: Horrible creatures!

NATALYA: Every one who joins them has to give a pint of his blood. They need it for their correspondence.

IVAN: Yes—it's the only kind of ink they use.

NATALYA: They use it to write to the Tsar.

IVAN: They fear nothing, they reverence nothing—neither God nor the Tsar—only— (*Breaks off.*)

NATALYA (*very eagerly*): Only what?

IVAN: You ladies, don't know it? (*Bashfully.*) Ah, then I couldn't say it.—

NATALYA (*insisting*): But Ivan Pavlovich, do
— — —

IVAN (*to Varvara*): Shall I tell, Varya?

VARVARA (*reluctantly*): As far as I know—they respect neither God nor Tsar—nor do they believe in anything whatever.

IVAN (*gesture*): Oh, no! (*Whispering, bending over.*) They believe in— (*Looks around to make sure that Anna and Tanya don't hear.*) —naked women!

NATALYA: Shocking!

IVAN: My word of honor.

NATALYA: Young ones of course—


IVAN: Probably old ones also—everything is likely with such fools.

NATALYA: Everything has its charms.

IVAN: As for myself—there is no charm in—excuse me—naked old women— — However, its all the same—old or young—they are all the same.

NATALYA (*somewhat offended*): Very complimentary.

IVAN: Don't be angry with me, Natalya Dmitriyevna—But let us leave these cursed Socialists alone.



(*Quickly.*) How is your husband? Why is he not going with you to the Opera to-night?

NATALYA: Oh, he is so frightfully busy—The fifth night already that he has not slept at home.— He has to sleep through the day.

MARIA: How is that?

IVAN (*to Maria*): There it is again, you see.— It's the Socialists again who keep the Colonel from his sleep.—The gendarmes have their hands full just now.

NATALYA (*to Maria*): You see it's difficult to catch them in the daytime. They can be run to earth better by night. When everyone is comfortably in bed it's easier to manage—the house is all quiet—no one suspects anything—and the next day the other people think he has simply gone away—and the matter is finished—without any fuss.—

IVAN: Horrible creatures—what trouble they give—and how they multiply—No let up in sight— (*Impatiently.*) Clean and clean and never be able to clean out.

NATALYA: If I were the Governor General I should soon make a clearance—not an atom would remain.— Shoot them down at once and that's all.— No detention for two or three years for me—it doesn't pay to have to feed them for so long—and then the journey to Siberia.— That all costs money—and leaves so little for the poor officials, so they get badly paid.

IVAN: Or for the poor soldiers in Manchuria.

NATALYA: What is the latest news of the war? I haven't seen a newspaper for a long time.

MARIA: There's nothing to be got from our papers. And even from the foreign papers one can't earn much either—for the censor blots out more reading matter than he leaves in. When you open such a newspaper, there's nothing but black patches.

Anna and Tanya get up from looking over an album in the corner of the room and join the others at the table.

IVAN: Well—you know, the foreign papers write a lot of lies, and slander Russia awfully. The censor only wants to spare our nerves, and not let us excite ourselves.

ANNA: Still at politics?

NATALYA: Very interesting matters. (*Looks at her watch and gets up quickly.*) Dear me, I shall be late for the theatre.

VARVARA: It is just near by.

NATALYA (*to Varvara as she is going out; threatening playfully*): Three months since you've been to see me—and I had to call on you at last. Aren't you ashamed of yourself? Well, Ivan Pavlovich, if you're coming along— (*Shakes hands with all and hurries out.*)

Ivan swallows another glass and hurries out too.

A slight awkward pause.

ANNA (*banteringly*): Why don't you visit the lady, Auntie?

VARVARA: Oh, I'm glad enough when she leaves me in peace. I have to be so careful with her. She's quite capable of having a police search made here.

ANNA: A police search made here—in the house

of a government official? Why—what could they possibly find here? What are you talking about, Auntie?

Maria puts her hand into her pocket, turns nervously and looks around uneasily.

VARVARA (*recollecting*): Yes, of course—let us see it, Maria!

Maria takes out the printed sheet, unfolds it and is going to read. Suddenly Varvara rises, runs to the door, turns the key in the lock, returns to the sofa and looks at the paper which Maria is holding. Anna and Tanya come nearer and listen.

MARIA (*reads quietly but quickly—without pathos*): “The general strike which gave vent to the conscious wish of thousands of the workmen of our town has placed us on the threshold of a revolution. Numberless scores of professionals from among the intellectuals have joined us. All those living in the service of capital have left their work to join our army. The boys from the colleges have joined the ranks of the workmen. Even the Liberals have risen against the Government, the oppressor of all ranks of Society—for no one believes its wornout old lies any longer. We have seen what means it employs. The Tsar’s soldiery, beaten and hunted in Manchuria, but courageous and daring in the fight against defenceless people, against women and children — — this wild, cruel, mercenary band was let loose on crowds of quiet workmen, glowing with holy enthusiasm for their Cause!

During the following words the listeners express their horror and disgust in suitable gestures. Anna is the quietest of all.

Maria's voice trembles more and more as she tries in vain to suppress her increasing emotion. She reads more and more slowly and softly, with brief interruptions:

"We have seen how they fired on the people, only for shouting or gesticulating, often for no reason at all. We have seen the Cossacks shooting into a lot of terrified women and children, who had crowded into a doorway for protection. We have looked on scenes and deeds which no one will ever forget who has once seen them.

Stops and looks into the terror-stricken eyes of the others. Takes a deep breath, and continues slowly:

"The details of these cruelties and crimes—many have even yet escaped public notice—make a picture of indescribable horror, which we wish to hold up to our people and the whole of Europe. He who can look on this picture and not cry: 'Revenge! To Arms!' let him leave us and our Cause. Common sense and forethought for the future of our Cause made us call 'Halt' to those who, unarmed and defenceless, wished to rush wildly against the armed military. But things have happened which no man can tolerate, and a number of single deeds of heroic bravery have taken place in the suburbs and in the workmen's quarters, many of which may never be heard of. They form the chronicle of our days, written in blood—a chronicle to which now, every hour, a new page is added."

In her last words are audible suppressed sobs,

she breaks off, lets her hand sink back; the paper falls from her hands. Silence for a minute.

Varvara picks up the paper and reads in a low voice which betrays her emotion. Still more slowly than Maria:

"We can read your thoughts, Comrades, we can see your eyes inflamed with pain and the desire for vengeance, we hear the same words, the same cry, bursting with one accord from all our breasts: 'To Arms, To Arms!'

MARIA (*who during the last words has been looking on the paper again, carried away with excitement, shouts along with Varvara*): "To Arms!"

VARVARA: "It is true, Brothers, that we are defenceless, but the hour is close at hand. We have been through the ins and outs of the hell of conspirative work, and at last the moment has come when we may arm, when we must arm. For, what until now has only been a little flame may at any instant burst out into a resplendent blaze all over the country—a blaze the like of which mankind has never seen." (*Breaks off exhausted.*) Anna, read on.

ANNA (*with expression, and in a voice filled with hatred*): "The hour of judgment is at hand. And no power in heaven or on earth can postpone the fulfillment of that judgment. (*Slowly.*) Down into hell sinks the horrible spectre that has sapped our country dry and left it bloodless and desolate. At last the slave becomes the free citizen in these boundless plains, over which till now hovered the black shadow of coarse brutality—where only the prison chains clanked—where

only the stifled groans of millions of tortured victims could be heard—where the blood of the noblest heroes flowed—

Maria, who for some time has been hiding her eyes in her handkerchief, sobs aloud.

VARVARA (*anxiously*): What is it, dear Maria Nikolayevna?

MARIA (*sobbing*): My poor brother in Siberia—

TANYA (*almost crying also*): Our poor Andrey—

MARIA (*drying her eyes quickly*): Don't speak of it just now. (*Beseechingly.*) Please, go on reading.

ANNA (*reading*): "Only the keen edge of the sword can cut out this horrible corroding sore which is festering on the body of the people.

Maria takes her purse out of her pocket, after a minute she gets up, unnoticed by the others, and walks restlessly up and down the room.

ANNA (*meanwhile continuing reading*): "But the great, the holy day is at hand—already the monster writhes in his death agony. Time presses. The days fly. Up and onward, Comrades! To Arms! Down with Autocracy! Long life to our work and our ideals, on whose altars so many heroes have joyfully and willingly sacrificed their lives!

"Long live the fight, carried on in their name!

"Long live the weapons which bring us victory!

"Long live the democratic Republic!"

MARIA (*standing in the middle of the room makes a movement as if wanting to give her purse to some one; at Anna's last words she cries passionately, as if not able to restrain herself any longer*): Where shall

I find them?— What is their address?— — (*Takes the paper and looks into it, but finds no address,— crushes it up in her hands.*) Where shall I find them?— Where shall I find them?— — (*Becomes absorbed in thought and lets her hands hang down in resignation.*)

The others sit in dull, hopeless silence.

MARIA (*with sudden determination goes up to Varvara and takes her hand*): Forgive me, Varvara Andreyevna.— (*To Tanya.*) Tanya, we must go.

They shake hands silently and go to door on right, but it is locked and they cannot open it. Varvara hurries up, turns key and opens the door. Maria and Tanya go out. Varvara and Anna stand and look at each other helplessly.

VARVARA: Terrible—terrible times are coming.

ANNA: Better times, Auntie! (*Varvara looks at her watch nervously; Anna noticing it.*) Are you expecting any one, Auntie?

VARVARA (*looks at her keenly; unsteadily at first, as if the words came against her will*): Anuta—Anuta—I must tell you— —

ANNA (*with suppressed excitement*): What is it?

VARVARA: I must tell you—I can say it to you—I— — (*Quickly.*) They have stored a number of forbidden books here—with me— —

ANNA (*beside herself with joy*): What—here—with you, Aunt?

VARVARA: There, in the book-case—there is plenty of room there.

ANNA (*as before; admiringly*): And you aren't the least afraid?—not afraid of Uncle?

VARVARA: He never looks at the books. (*Quickly, with sudden fear.*) But now—with all these searches—everywhere—I am terribly afraid. . . .

KATYA (*the servant, comes in from right*): Please, ma'am, a girl from the stores.

VARVARA (*surprised*): A girl?

Katya goes out.

OLGA LIANOVICH (*enters—a young girl about 18 years old, very plainly dressed, wears two long plaits down her back. Carries a box, such as is used by dressmakers for sending dresses to their customers*): I am sorry to be so late—

VARVARA: I have not ordered anything from the stores— —

OLGA (*uneasily*): Sergey Mikhaylovich was to have come— — —

VARVARA (*terrified*): What has happened to him? (*Olga looks at Anna uneasy on account of her presence.*) You need not fear.—Speak out.

OLGA: I am Olga Lianovich. (*Dully.*) Sergey has been arrested.

VARVARA (*despairingly*): Heavens—heavens— — (*Stands for a minute looking at her; sorrowfully.*) And you have come in his place?—have you begun already—so young?

OLGA: We must begin early. The life of a revolutionist is short. They don't let us live long.

VARVARA: So you have come instead of him to

fetch "paper" from me? Take it—take it quickly—it is burning me.

OLGA (*sadly*): I have brought some more with me—here—a box full.

VARVARA (*in despair*): But I can't take it—have pity on me—I can't take it—they are searching every house now. . . .

OLGA (*helplessly*): But what shall I do with it now? We have had such terrible losses lately—it is safer here than anywhere else—

VARVARA: I am so frightened—these unsettled, terrible days—these perpetual searches—I can't sleep nights.

OLGA: We are helpless. Critical days have come upon us—days of fear and terror. The whole fabric of our organization is breaking and bursting. Take the things—Varvara Sergeyevna—just once more.

VARVARA (*struggling with herself, at last consenting*): Well, what can I do with you—? (*Olga presses her hand gratefully; Varvara recollecting.*) But Sergey is in prison—he may be forced to confess.— No—I can't—I can't— — —

OLGA: What are you afraid of? Do you not know us yet? (*Energetically.*) There are no tortures, even in Russia, which we fear. (*Turns to go. Anna comes up to her and silently presses her hand. Olga goes out. Varvara goes to the bay-window and looks out, in order to conceal her emotion.*)

ANNA (*running after her and throwing her arms around her*): Auntie, how I love you.

VARVARA: Do you want to choke me?

ANNA: You are so kind!

VARVARA (*turning it off*): Foolish girl. (*Turning to the middle bay-window.*) Do you see?—He has just driven up—from Garden Street.—

ANNA: Only now?

VARVARA: Yes, he's only coming for the ballet—look there, he has just got out.

ANNA: And the chief of Police is getting out of his carriage.

VARVARA: How everybody bends and bows to him.

ANNA: These are only detectives in plain clothes. (*A moment's pause; with hatred in her voice.*) So much blood-shed—for the sake of an order, or a little promotion.

VARVARA: And he still lives.

ANNA (*pleased, smiling*): Are you as radical as that, Aunt, dear?! (*Embraces her joyfully.*) I have found so much happiness about me in the last few days—so much happiness! How blind I have been, not to see what was happening close beside me.—My courage comes back again.—Our Cause lives.

VARVARA (*astonished*): Our Cause—?

ANNA (*earnestly*): Yes, Aunt—Our Cause.

VARVARA: And I never suspected anything.

ANNA: So it is with us—unfortunately,—care is needed. One must be careful even with their own people.

KATYA (*comes in from right*): A gentleman is here and says he wishes to speak to the young lady alone.

VARVARA (*terrified*): Anuta—Anuta—for heaven's sake be careful—I am so frightened—I shall take away the books in the meantime and put them in the book case. (*Tries to lift the box.*) How heavy it is—help me, Anuta. (*Anna helps her to carry box.*) How ~~die~~ she manage to carry it alone—what a young girl (*Admiringly.*) What people they are! (*Goes on with Anna, on left.*)

From right comes Vasili, slowly walking, deadly pale, wrapped in a cloak. He gazes round with a dazed look, stops in the middle of the room; does not see.

ANNA (*who comes back from left and stops at some distance, looking at him in astonishment. With anxiety*): Vasya—Vasya—is it you? (*Quickly.*) I was coming to-morrow.—Why did you expose yourself to such risk? I was coming—I was coming positively.

VASILII (*in a hollow voice*): You need not come any more.

ANNA (*with increasing anxiety*): What is it?—tell me. Vasya?—do tell me—

VASILII (*as before with staring eyes*): I wanted—I had to see you once more.

ANNA (*as before*): Vasili—what are you about? (*Gazes into his eyes with a piercing look as if trying to read in them, whilst her face expresses ever growing horror and her lips whisper*) Vasili—Vasili— (*Till at last it all dawns upon her, and she cries despairingly.*) No—no—it—cannot be—Vasya—Vasya—you?— Why you?— So soon. (*Breaks off; her face*

is distorted with pain and she looks at Vasili with staring eyes.)

VASILI (*dully*): It must be— —

ANNA (*closing her eyes and keeping back her tears*): It must be?

VASILI (*dully*): The time has come—the bell of blood must swing— —

ANNA (*wailing*): The bell of blood—the bell of woe.

VASILI (*as before*): I feel as if I were the arm of the oppressed people—stretching and reaching out for one of the heads of the hydra—I feel it is a just act—there must be no doubting—no flinching—no turning back.— I only know that it must be—I feel a great tremendous power—pushing—driving— —commanding— —

ANNA: Vasili, you are mine—all mine—and now to lose you—so suddenly!—Must it be? So soon—Vasili,—so— —

VASILI (*tenderly*): Anuta—you gave me a cup brimming over with happiness—but with so much weakness in. It made me lose faith in myself. But strength and peace have come back to me, and this hand shall not tremble—I will fearlessly look death in the eyes.—But in your eyes—Anuta—I see such boundless sadness. . . .

Anna looks him steadily in the eyes, makes a gesture, trying to speak, but the words refuse to leave her lips.

VASILI: This hand will not tremble—but I must

have you near me—must feel your presence—must hear you commanding me: “Go!”


ANNA (*in ecstasy*): Yes,—I shall go with you.

VASIL: Madness—child—not that!—He will pass here soon, driving from the Opera, and you must put a light in the window—as a sign to me—as a command—as a last greeting;—I sent away the comrade who was to give me the signal— — — The last few moments I must be with you alone. (*Pointing to the left bay-window.*) Over there—near the park—I shall sit on the bench in the shadow of the trees—and half dreaming, half waking, I shall gaze at your window—and thus sit there with you beside me as it were—till the last greeting flashes out— Then I shall know the time has come— — (*After a pause, entreatingly.*) See to it—Anuta—that I am up in good time—for the deed.

ANNA (*struggling with her sobs*): Give you a signal for death?—for our eternal separation?— — that— — —is beyond my strength— — (*Pause. Suddenly, as if some hope is dawning; lively.*) Must he pass here?— He can just as likely drive back by Castle Street.—

VASIL: There, too,—a life is waiting, ready to swing the bell of blood.—

ANNA: And if he drives that way, what then? Tell me quickly—Vasili—we shall leave town, shall we not?— —and go away, far away—to Europe—where we can breathe freely—we can work for the Cause there, too. One half year of happiness—just one short half year of the happiness of a human being



—and then—when the longing to do something real calls us—we shall come back. But—at least, one moment of happiness! Vasili, is not it so?

They smile at each other blissfully.

VASILY (*his face suddenly darkening*): Once again life has smiled to me bewitchingly, trying to lure me on— Anuta, you are making it so hard for me to die— — But it is my fate to-night—those who are to die feel what is coming!— Perhaps freedom may dawn to-morrow—but I shall not see it—I must go. Not one day—not one hour of this time of triumph shall I have; but I believe—that if I strike the bell to-day—all those around will awaken—and perhaps you, Anna—will see Russia free yet. . . . On that day, Anna—think of me. . . .

ANNA: Vasili!

VASILY (*presses her hand*): Good-bye Anuta. . . .

Anna is on the point of throwing her arms around his neck, but stops on noticing his almost imperceptible movement to prevent it.

VASILY: I must be strong to-day. (*Frees his hand from hers.*) Good-bye. . . .

ANNA (*in passionate entreaty*): There is time yet—there is still time— —

VASILY (*taking a step backward*): There is a comrade waiting for me.

ANNA (*as before*): One moment more—only one moment— — —

VASILY (*almost at the door*): Time is pressing—time is pressing— — —

ANNA (*crying out*): Time—stand still! (*Vasili*

goes out.) Oh, stay—stay—don't go yet. . . . (*Remains standing at the door gazing after him with outstretched arms.*)

VARVARA (*comes in from left, goes up to Anna, and puts her arms around her; tenderly*): Anuta, what was it? News from your sick friend?

ANNA (*looking at Varvara; without understanding*): What—how— — (*After a moment, to herself.*) To sacrifice life alone to the Cause—mere life—that must be glorious—but more than life. . . .

VARVARA (*discreetly*): What was it then?

ANNA: Oh, Aunt—don't ask me— — (*Walks up and down the room.*) No—no— It shall not happen— — — (*Goes quickly to the bay-window and looks through the left pane—shades her eyes with her hands to see better. Varvara comes up beside her.*) It is impossible to see anything in Garden Street—lamp-posts on one side only—the other side so dark.

VARVARA: Yes, the park is never lit up.

ANNA: The trees have never looked so black—and over there around the Opera House it is so bright. On one side—light and gaiety, on the other—darkness and horror— —all over Russia the same thing. . . . (*She looks through the left bay-window as if trying to see something in the street.*)

VARVARA (*looking through the middle window*): Look!—the carriages are driving up already.

Anna springs quickly from the window to the center of the room.

VARVARA (*still at the window, without turning*

round to Anna): Come and see—they are coming this way.—

ANNA (*to herself, wildly*): Here? this way?— —
(*To Varvara.*) How do you know, Aunt?

VARVARA (*in the same position*): The carriages are headed in our direction.

Anna begins moving as if in a hypnotic state, takes a box of matches from the table, goes to the side bureau, lights one of the candles, and takes the candlestick in her hand. Stands thus for a minute, then with sudden determination blows it out and puts it back in its place.


VARVARA (*from the window*): The Chief of Police is getting into his carriage. (*Anna strikes match after match, each of which, after a minute's hesitation, she throws away.*) Now he is driving off.

Carriage is heard approaching in the street.

Now the Governor General is getting into his carriage—see how everybody around is bending and bowing again.

At this moment the first carriage is heard driving past. Anna hurriedly lights the candle, places the candlestick in the left bay-window, runs away quickly and remains standing at the table, staring wildly in front of her with an expectant look.

A second carriage is heard coming along and thundering past, and Cossacks trotting behind. A minute afterward the loud explosion of a bomb is heard a little distance off.—The windows rattle. Down in the street, screams, whistling and shouting are heard.—Tumult.



ANNA (*falls on her knees with a heartrending cry of despair. Whispers, staring into vacancy*): Vasya—my Vasya— —my Vasya— —

VARVARA (*who had at once noticed the lighted candle in the window, is taking it away, but the noise of the explosion makes her drop the candlestick out of her hand*): Anuta—what have you done?— — (*Runs to Anna who is shaken with agonized sobs and wild hysterical laughter.*)

Katya bursts into the room and runs distractedly about.

VARVARA (*lifting up Anna tenderly in her arms*): Anuta—come to—Anuta—Anuta!—

ANNA (*opens her eyes wide; as if waking suddenly out of a deep slumber—looks round and frees herself from Varvard's arms. Slowly*): Yes, Aunt—you are right. (*Drying her eyes; quickly.*) Tears are foolish.— (*Bitterly.*) Tears are foolish.— (*Harshly.*) Tears are foolish.— (*Shouts.*) The bell must swing—The bell must ring— —Onward, brothers!— — — (*With pain.*) The bell of blood. . . . (*Shouts in transport.*) ONWARD! ONWARD!— — — (*The curtain falls quickly. Still audible.*) Onward!—Onward! . . .

THE END.

SOCIALISM INEVITABLE

WILSHIRE EDITORIALS

By GAYLORD WILSHIRE

FROM A CORNELL PROFESSOR

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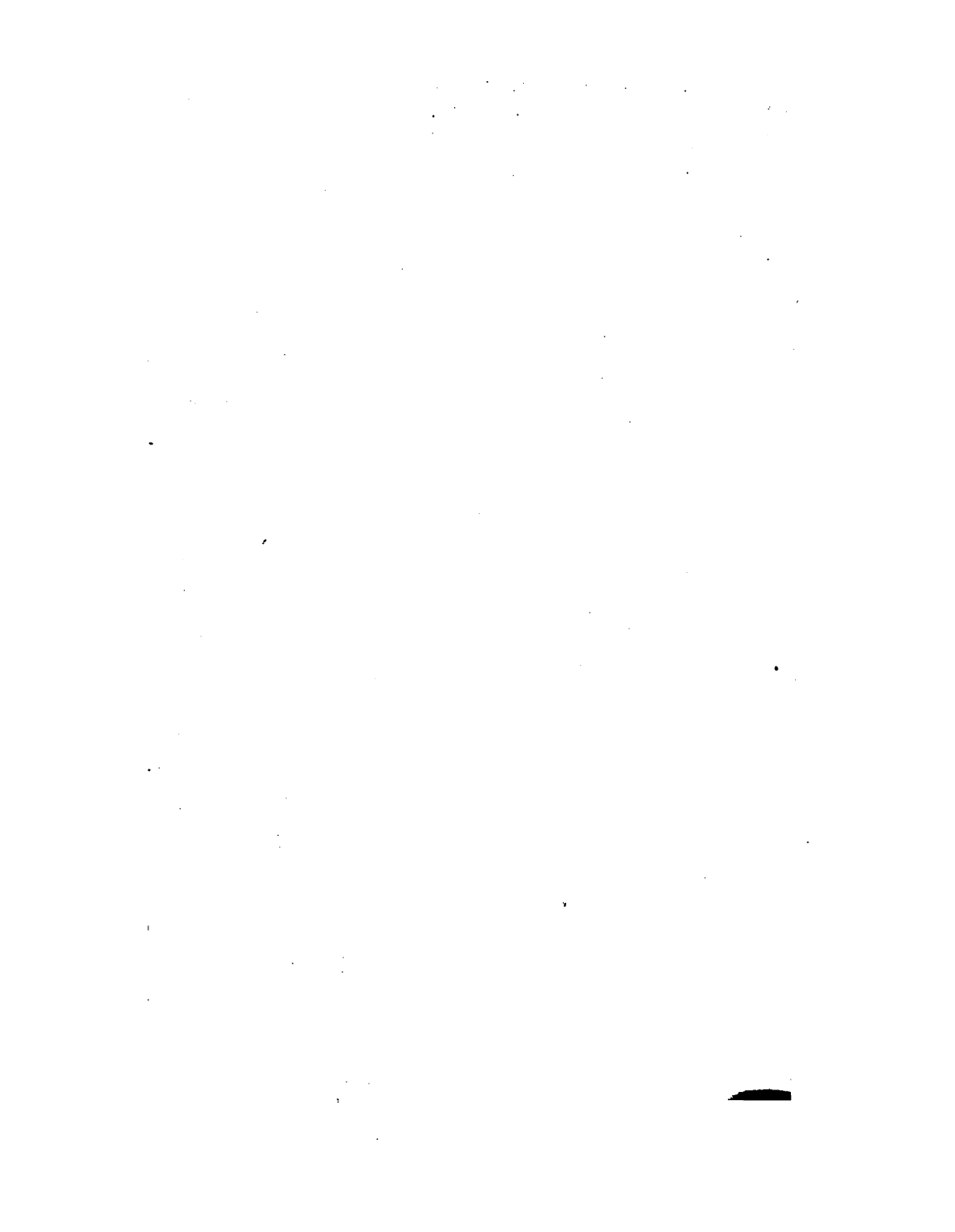
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